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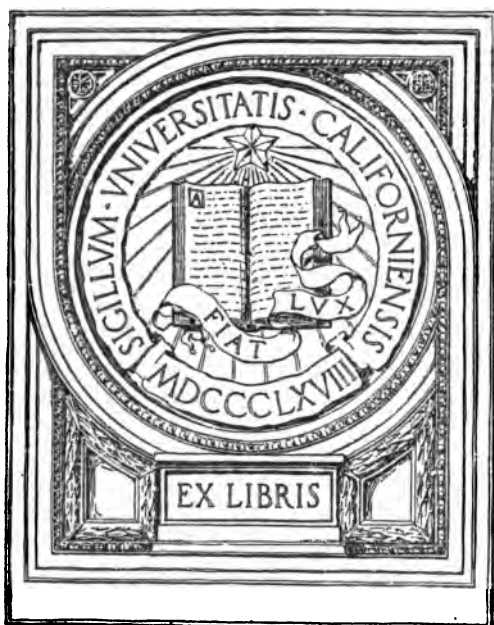
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ALTHEA

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

HORTUS VITÆ

THE ENCHANTED WOODS

THE SPIRIT OF ROME

HAUNTINGS: FANTASTIC STORIES

THE SENTIMENTAL TRAVELLER

POPE JACYNTH AND OTHER FANTASTIC TALES

GENIUS LOCI; NOTES ON PLACES

LIMBO AND OTHER ESSAYS, TO
WHICH IS NOW ADDED ARIADNE IN
MANTUA

RENAISSANCE FANCIES AND
STUDIES

THE COUNTESS OF ALBANY. ILLUSTRATED

LAURUS NOBILIS: CHAPTERS ON
ART AND LIFE

ALTHEA

: : DIALOGUES ON : :
ASPIRATIONS & DUTIES

BY

VERNON LEE

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NEW EDITION

TO THE
MEMBERS OF THE
SOCIETY OF
SCOTLAND

Turnbull & Spears, Printers, Edinburgh

TO
C. A. T.

271824

v

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INTRODUCTORY

A VOLUME of dialogues similar to these, which I collected some eight years ago, was prefaced by an elaborate account of a personage called Baldwin. Re-reading those pages just now, as a preliminary to prefacing this new set of dialogues, I find to my surprise that the only information about him which I am called to add is that this shadowy personage, about whose real existence and identity I once seemed so certain, has ceased to exist. Those readers who quite properly leave the preface to the last, will here interrupt with the statement that they have met Baldwin in every one of these dialogues; that is true, but it does not prevent his having ceased to exist. For Baldwin has departed this vague life of reality—reality which is vague because it is complex and shifting—to reappear in the clear, solid existence of imaginary beings; of those typical representatives of tendencies and ideas who are so consolingly consistent; and who stand (being undisturbed by vital processes) as gentle and spirited as a saddler's wooden horse, that horse which forever paws without moving, for the better display of intellectual harness and trappings. More plainly but less intelligibly: in these new dialogues Baldwin is employed merely to express a portion of my own

notions, those particularly which I find it least easy to attribute to the other lay figures which I have roughly fashioned, for my greater pleasure, in the approximate likeness of certain of my friends. For although it has been needful occasionally to push ideas to consequences which I have had to set other *dramatis personæ* or my docile, unreal Baldwin to combat; nay, even sometimes to copy from other showmen's boxes a spiritual puppet for which I had no model; yet, taken as a whole, the ideas and tendencies distributed among my half-dozen speakers are my own ideas and tendencies, various, shifting, but never really conflicting. So that the whole of a dialogue, the various parts united or balanced, will give the impressions, fluctuating, consecutive, but consistent, which I find in my mind or my note-book on the subject, say, of human intercourse, of the social question, or of what I have ventured to call by the venerable or desecrated name of *spiritual life*. Thus much to forestall such readers as might complain that certain important views of a subject, to wit, their own, have been misinterpreted or omitted in these dialogues: if misinterpretation or omission there be, it is no trick of discussion, but the result of a regrettable incapacity to realise characters and attitudes too far removed from my own.

I have said that Baldwin—the real, living Baldwin of the book named after him—has ceased to exist. Baldwin has died because, like certain insects, he was organized to live only a few days. He belonged, like

many of our dead selves, of the youthful predecessors of our identity, to a genus of ephemera which require an universe without rain, wind, or frost, in fact, made on purpose for them ; for the lack of which they suffer horribly, and after brief dragging and fluttering, speedily de cease ; die, to resuscitate most often, alas (the reverse in this of butterflies), as some humbler kind of creature, less devoted to sunshine, more agreeable to mud. By this I would imply that a reader of my earlier dialogues will find in these new ones a good deal which directly contradicts them, and, what is more important, a different attitude towards the world and things : the difference there must necessarily be between the attitude of youth and the attitude of maturer life. But I do not wish to suggest that, if I could, I would alter or withdraw any portion of my former dialogues. It would surely be a pity if the earlier thought of any sincere mind became inaccessible to others, since what we all require are companions in thinking, quite as much as teachers of thought ; and youth is, perhaps, the truest companion for youth. Moreover, it is only through the comparison of my two books together (and this is my reason for reverting to my former volume with such seeming egoism), through the comparison of what I thought and felt with what I think and feel, that I can achieve what I greatly have at heart, namely : to point out one road, at least, along which we modern men and women may reach serenity of mind after the uncomfortable resting-places

of our youthful thought. For, in the youth of many of us, there may have been self-satisfaction in abundance, but certainly spiritual satisfaction of no other sort; and some of us, professed unbelievers, have traversed sloughs of despond by no means inferior to those of the orthodox. Only, with the significant difference, that while our fathers made themselves wretched about their unworthiness in the eyes of God, we latter-day religious folk suffered sincere misery for the opposite reason: the universe and its arrangements dissatisfied man. My speech is not ironical, nor have I followed some of my friends back into unsatisfactory orthodoxy, into acquiescence with the unintelligible and barbarously odious, from irritation at the painful things, the darkness revealed by reason. On the contrary, it seems to me that increased thoughtfulness and experience ought to make such intellectual apostasy more difficult, by showing the unreasonableness, the exaggerated personality, the childish expectation that all things should be arranged to suit our likings, which is always at the back of it. I cannot sympathise with such apostasy; but I can sympathise with much that went to produce it. I have suffered the spiritual misery of those who have weighed and found wanting; and no more than they, no more than my former self can I get moral satisfaction from the contemplation of the universe, be the showman thereof an intellectual exquisite like Emerson or a mystical sensualist like Whitman. Nay, I should wish that in reading these

dialogues, readers akin to myself might little by little come to guess, as I came to guess while writing them, whence this inevitable spiritual discomfort in our proximate past, and why it must be difficult for any of us contemporaries to arrive at once at the secret of spiritual peace, at the knowledge that we must seek for moral satisfaction only in ourselves.

One-half of this explanation must be sought for in the fact that we have all of us, however unorthodox, been nourished on theological notions and ideals; nay, that it may take generations, even among the least hampered by the world's older religions, before other notions and ideals have become organic in young minds. Besides, it is almost inevitable that we should first look round at the world and things in the selfsame spirit, the spirit of immaturity, of which, throughout the centuries, the theological notions, standards, and ideals have been the expression. We begin life, inevitably, knowing so little of anything besides ourselves, that, though the expression seems paradoxical, we can know even ourselves only very slightly; for knowledge means comparison; and what is there to compare with? Hence, we naturally imagine that everything is made for us, and that everything not made for us (if so be that anything is) must be made in our image. This, you may impatiently exclaim, is the *modus operandi* of savages and children; it is well known and obvious, so why talk about it? Because, so far as I can see,

it is not sufficiently admitted that it is also the *modus operandi* of most grown-up so-called civilized folk, and has been of all established religions. There is nothing in the world but me, nothing at least of any importance, that is the beginning; nothing not *for* me, is the next step; nothing not *like* me; whence class arrangements, domestic and international morality, and the desire to reduce all persons to the same conduct and opinions; whence, by a natural inversion, if I am for a some one greater than myself, evidently that some one must be like me too; so that the notion that the universe is made solely for the delectation of man becomes tempered with the corresponding notion that man is made solely for the delectation of God, delectation taking the very strange forms we all know, the same, if we look them in the face, as the satisfactions which man, sometimes benevolent, sometimes cruel, and always vain, extracts from his fellow-creatures. And now, when to many persons there can no longer be a question of a Godhead for whose satisfaction man is put through his many antics, it very naturally follows. . . . But we are still so theological that to put the thought into words would horrify us with the sense of blasphemy. We should not relish being discussed so freely ourselves.

Briefly, we suffer terribly, many of us, from what is in reality mere youthful egoism projected into the region of spiritual things, where egoism is least expected. Pain, impurity, the various forms of cruelty and in-

justice implied in death and life and birth, afflict us in a particular way, quite apart from the share of suffering they bring us, or from the share of responsibility we have in them; they distress us as outrage to our ideals, that is to say, as false notes, horrible, hideous passages all out of tune, in the great symphony of cause and effect which the universe is playing, and playing, as we candidly take for granted, for our enjoyment. Now this is but a form of that ingenuous selfishness which embitters vain and covetous persons, when they discover that the world's attention or properties are not exclusively for them, which makes girls despair of love and young men of work, because love is not as inexhaustible, work as fruitful as in the universe—made like Omar Khayyam's, according to their hearts' desire—of which the real one ought to be a faithful copy. Poor people, inevitably foolish, inevitably wretched, our adversaries, our friends, ourselves!

Yet in this furthest expansion of our youthful graspingness, in this transcendent expectation and disappointment, there is, or ought to be, the rudiment of some wisdom and happiness; since to be unhappy about the universe, to be pained at abstract evil, to suffer in our ideals, implies the possibility at least of not being wholly engrossed with flesh-pots and vanities. Nay, such spiritual suffering implies the probability of our having attained to some life wider than our own, more fertile of happi-

ness than the cramped and cabined life of the mere ego.

For the sweetness of life is quickly exhausted if we seek only to find and consume it ; it is pretty well inexhaustible if we work, however little, to increase it. For immense as are the claims of our selfishness, our powers of selfish enjoyment are singularly limited ; we wear ourselves out in the solitude of ambition, of vanity, of covetousness, of emotional graspingness, even as of grosser instincts ; and require for our renewal the fruitful contact of our thoughts and wishes with the necessities of others. Hence the despair of men like Byron and Baudelaire ; the aridity of spiritual egoists, knowing no soul except their own, like Pascal.

If the following pages be of any use, it will be mainly inasmuch as they show that personal serenity is achieved quite unconsciously in the process of wondering what may be our duties to others ; not the serenity of complacent contemplation of other folks' share of misery, but the serenity of satisfaction with one's own lot in the world, of one's own powers and opportunities of being happy, due to the constant wish that those powers and opportunities of happiness be extended to others.

For this reason I have made the discussions which unfold my thoughts revolve no longer round the figure called Baldwin, identified in my mind with so much that belonged to an earlier stage of my thought, to so

much affirmation which seemed the reaction against inevitable doubt, to so much resignation which savoured very largely of despair. I have taken as central figure in these dialogues one of those rare natures so strangely balanced that they recognize truth as soon as they see it; and who, never making many claims for themselves, never go through the disappointment which underlies most *Weltschmerz*; natures which know spontaneously what the rest of us learn by experience and reflection; fortunate samples of what we may perhaps all become; but, for that very reason, incapable of serving as guides in the difficult way of becoming it.

Althea is naturally the pupil of Baldwin; for, being all she is by the mere grace of God, she is, at first, inarticulate, unreasoning, ignorant of all why and wherefore, and requires to be taught many things which others know. But, once having learned the names, so to speak, of her instincts, the premises of her unconscious arguments, she becomes, as necessarily, the precursor of many of Baldwin's best thoughts, the perfecter of most of them. Her notions and decisions require to be disputed or explained only by natures more complex, more struggling, less fortunate than herself; to be tempered by characters better acquainted with weakness and sorrow, capable of bringing the element which is wanted to make love of truth and of justice efficient, mere love of the creatures who suffer and strive, of the creatures who can help and be helped.

Of the real Baldwin, the Baldwin of my younger

ideas and aspirations, I have long since taken leave.
May I become worthy to live with my thoughts in the
presence, always, of the other friends who surround
Althea.

MAIANO, *near* FLORENCE,

May, 1893.

THE VALUE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

THE VALUE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

I

"I WANT you to explain," said Althea, as the park gate swung behind them, and they emerged into a high-lying, half-reaped field, whence the big horses were being led away in the distance, leaving the stranded reaping-machines, with their sharp red profile, grotesque against the pale sky, "why are you angry with these sort of people? You are quite horrid about them; and it bothers me, because I always fancied you must be so just and liberal-minded to everybody. Of course," she added, shading her eyes as she looked at the sun-permeated masses of unreaped barley, yellow hazes of stalks spiked with long, stiff, interlacing beards, and at the shining stubble, on which the great pale corn-stooks stood, placid and majestic, with something, as she had remarked, that reminded you of the Venus of Milo; "of course I seem to have no right to speak on the subject: I'm so solitary, and rude, and unable to sympathize, and people bore me so, and seem so much less real than all these other things, the trees, I mean, and clouds, and grass, and sheep, and lights and shadows. Of course I *am* like that, but I've always thought it must be because I'm selfish and stupid, and have never

been taught anything except to ride, and am generally all wrong, you know, and so can't find out the good in creatures. And I hoped you would perhaps show me how to be different. But now it is you who are harsh and impatient with these poor people, who, after all, do care about some *real* things, books and pictures, and outdoor things; and don't think merely of titles, and carriage-horses, and diamonds, and disgusting stories about their neighbours. And now I want you to explain why."

"Why, what have I said against your friends?" said Baldwin, laughing. He had been thinking during the last ten minutes, not at all of that particular set of half-fashionable, half-artistic people; but of this strange and delightful creature by his side; of how she gave one the impression, with her large, calm, blond beauty, and that mixture of unconscious moral gravity and unconscious poetical vision, of being in some odd way closely akin to the trees and grass, and clouds and sea, the real things of the world, as she called them.

"You said they were parasites—funguses, that was the word," answered Althea, "and I want to know why."

"I meant," said Baldwin, "that these delightful friends of ours, with the beautifully furnished houses, and the beautifully furnished minds—full of all the most desirable easy-chairs, and old brocade, and Japanese toys, and exotic plants—that these charming, amiable

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creatures, for whose sake clever men are clever, and pretty women pretty, are living, all this while, off the spiritual effort of other folk ; receiving everything and giving nothing in return."

" But everybody cannot be a genius—a Turner, or a Ruskin, or a Browning. What right have you to expect it of them ? These creatures make the only return they can : they appreciate the beautiful things made by their betters. I don't see why you should call them names for that, poor things ! "

" I was not alluding to that," replied Baldwin, " I don't ask people to have faculties which they don't possess. I only ask them to make use of those they have got. I was looking at these people from the moral side rather than the intellectual."

" They are not wicked ; you yourself said there were some of them quite good. I am sure they are harmless," answered Althea, with a slight inflexion of contempt, as she took off her boating hat and held it above her eyes, while looking vaguely into the vague yellow sunset.

" I don't think they are harmless ; and I will show you presently why. It's just because they are, as you say, *quite good*, that they seem to me contemptible. They are incapable of doing a nasty thing themselves, nasty things have no attraction for them ; yet they live surrounded by people who are perpetually doing and saying nasty things, and they merely shrug their shoulders and say, ' There is a great deal that's good

in poor So-and-so after all.' They are mischievous because they tolerate in others what they would not tolerate in themselves. That is the reason why I despise them, Lady Althea."

"And the reason why I am hard towards them, perhaps harder than need be, almost," went on Baldwin, as they left the cornfields behind them, the big beeches and isolated ash trees, and made their way towards the sea, Althea's little brother hanging on to her arm, and the fox terrier running on in front; "the reason why I am hard to such creatures, my dear Lady Althea, is that I occasionally experience the temptation of becoming such a one myself. I find it so easy to look at only the good side of people who amuse me, or have some merit or other. I am angry with the slackness of certain folk, what they call *large-mindedness*, because I feel it would suit my laziness so well to be large-minded too. I assure you I feel at times a shame within myself, an inordinate respect and envy for people of cut-and-dried ideas, and a certain narrowness of nature, like my cousin Dorothy, who would simply turn away in detestation of so much that I analyze, explain, condone; to whom some creatures I tolerate would be simply repulsive. I wish that I too were narrow, had not a certain power of sympathizing and making allowance, a certain abominable adaptability to everything that is human."

Althea stopped and turned her head, less like a woman's, in its large placid beauty and intellectual

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candour, than like that of some antique youth's in whose marble effigy we fancy we recognize one of the speakers of the *Phaedo* or the *Euthydemus*. She was amused and incredulous, and determined to understand.

"I don't know what you mean, Mr Baldwin—do you, Harry?" she added smiling, as she leaned her arm on the shoulder of her brother, whose mind was divided between this discussion, which delighted his schoolboy logic, and the desire to investigate into the rabbit-holes of the rough ground they were coming to.

"You can't think how often I have tried to get myself most virtuously into the state of mind you are abusing so. You can't think how often I have felt bound to defend people and things to other people who seemed harsh, while I was just loathing them from the bottom of my soul. Only the other day I was trying to convince your cousin Dorothy that she was horribly narrow-minded because she wanted to chuck a certain book into the fire; and then, when somebody came and said, 'Disapprove of that book of Maupassant's! how very narrow-minded!' I almost threw the book at him and cried, 'But I disapprove of it just as much as Dorothy, I just abominate it.' Formerly, when I used still to go into the world (you know I only ride and go to picture-galleries now), I used to make myself quite miserable because my friends were not so indignant about people as I was—I remember making the most awful efforts to find out some good qualities in a woman who complained to me of the

social degeneracy of Florence, because in former days she never by any chance went to bed before nine A.M., nor got up before five P.M. I sat opposite and tried to persuade myself she was probably a very good mother, or a very good daughter, or a very good something or other, feeling that I was glaring at her all the time. Oh, Harry, don't you remember I had taken you there to keep me in countenance? In fact I really think," added the girl, "that the chief reason why I have become such a solitary owl is that I suffered too much in hearing people say the things they say in my set, and in trying to make allowance and not be rabid with them. And now you tell me this habit of understanding and making allowance is a moral danger, and that people who practise it are funguses."

"Not so quick, my dear Lady Althea," remonstrated Baldwin, "as Pascal's Casuists say—*Distinguo*: such power of enduring, of making allowance, of understanding; such catholicity seems to me indeed a great moral, and even, in a way, a great intellectual danger. Yet it is a good, a necessary thing. Only we must not allow it to eat us up, as (being more akin to easy living, pleasant intercourse, variety of experience, to all our moral laziness and intellectual small fry of pleasure) there is always a great likelihood of its doing. Let us understand all things, by all means, but let not the comprehension thereof lead us to toleration, as most often happens. The old saw, 'Qui comprend tout, sait tout pardonner,' is well and good, in so far as under-

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standing *how* nasty things have come about undoubtedly leads us to contemplate their metaphysical inevitableness. But to understand ought to imply the perception, not merely of cause, but also of effect ; and the perception of certain effects should make us pardon, as little as we pardon the tiger who may eat us up, the microbe that may poison us, or merely any inanimate nuisance of which we make short work. Cause makes us lenient and scientific ; effect makes us practical and relentless. The desideratum is clearly that we should understand all creatures, with a view to judging them, to separating such part of them as is useful, pleasant, as appeals to us (the mere commonest qualities of humanity suggested by the fact that, like ourselves, these creatures have a spine, arms and legs, father and mother, and probably, therefore, certain common human faculties also), to separating all this which is good from such other as is evil, doing mischief, or constituting an obstacle. You are quite right in thinking Dorothy narrow-minded for wishing to burn ' Bel Ami ' ; and you are quite right in being indignant with the persons who can't see why ' Bel Ami ' should seem fit for burning. It seems to me that the very reason for which we value Maupassant's genius and straightforwardness, namely, the use of such qualities to society, must make us dislike his cynicism and his foulness. After all, the reason which makes me like the kernel of a walnut is the very reason which makes me throw away the shell and the rind ; one is good and another bad, therefore

I must separate them. A story goes among the people of Rome," went on Baldwin, as they walked over the brownish grass, vider green or yellow even in the little boggy hollows, and its ridges delicately marked with delicate tufts of downy thistles, white and dim—"a story which is greatly to the point. One day Pope Sixtus was told of a wonder-working crucifix, which was attracting crowds to a certain church, and greatly glorifying certain monks. Pope Sixtus went forthwith to the church, knelt down, and devoutly said his prayers before that crucifix. But then he sprang up, drew a hatchet from under his robe, and chopping the crucifix through and through, exclaimed, 'Inasmuch as Christ, I worship thee; inasmuch as wood, I hack thee to bits.' 'Come Cristo, t' adoro; come legno, ti spezzo.' I don't think one could have a better motto to go through life with than that one; and some day, if ever I possess any knives and forks of my own, I intend to have them engraved with the crucifix and the hatchet, and the device, 'Come Cristo, t' adoro; come legno, ti spezzo.'"

"And are you going to hack us to bits, also, Mr Baldwin?" asked the boy, walking along with his sister's arm on his shoulder, like one of the little fauns who support a young god in some antique group.

"To hack to bits, certainly; but also to adore. You must not leave out that half of the business; it's more important almost than the other."

"But I don't yet understand," said the girl, after a pause, "how it all applies to those poor fungus creatures.

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Why should they be expected to worship, or to hack to pieces, either or both ? Isn't it enough if they behave decently themselves ? They can't do much good, perhaps ; but, at least, they do no harm."

"Pardon me," answered Baldwin, "they could do good, and they are doing harm. They are doing harm in abetting, in fostering, by their silence, the vices which they do not themselves practise, and which they might, by their disapproval, diminish, in however infinitesimal a degree. Every time that an honest woman receives at her house a woman who is not honest, because she is agreeable or good-looking, or has got a good social position ; every time that an honest man shows himself at his club with a man who doesn't pay his debts, or plays the Don Juan, because that man is good company, or has some official position or some artistic talent ; every time that a man or a woman lets pass a word that slanders a neighbour or throws doubt upon decent living ;—every time that one of these things happens, there is, for the moment, an honest man or woman the less in the world ; a little more evil and a little less good than there was before. And what is more, every time that one of our harmless friends, as you consider them, lets some more or less harmful creature go scot free, our harmless friend, now harmless no longer, is guilty of what appears to me a very mean trick—refusing to pay back to the future whatever he owes to the good behaviour, the generous choice, of the past. For every good we are permitted to enjoy, every evil we are per-

mitted to escape, is largely due to the choice, easy or bitter, conscious or unconscious, of the men and women of former days. The men and women of former days ? No, not merely upon them, but upon the men and women of the present—upon their own action, and their power of modifying ours. For every evil committed or tolerated not only does its own mischief, not only contaminates with its example ; but diminishes the innocent freedom of harmless people, and fills their lives with sacrifices, worries, suspicion, and false positions. Just think of the fearful waste of time, trouble, and money that is implied by the necessity of protecting ourselves against thieves and cheats—nay, merely slovenly people ! Why, half the revenue of every nation almost, and a large proportion of the produce of every kind of industry, are wasted in paying policemen, lawyers, overseers, and such-like. And have you ever reflected that the restrictions placed upon nearly all women's lives—restrictions upon their studying, travelling, nay, in many countries, even upon their freely walking about in broad daylight—are due mainly to the fact that a certain number of male cads are tolerated by society, high and low ? In fact, if we look at immorality of any kind, active or passive, we shall see that one of its most unmistakable features is that it is a cheating—that it is the doing of a thing which, in larger or lesser degree, makes individual and social life impossible, by those who have benefited by that individual or social life ; that it is, in fact, the trying

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to take, and not give in return : the reversing of the precept, ' Do unto others——' ”

A curious light came into Lady Althea's clear brown eyes, as if her whole soul were gathered there to see and understand, to come in contact with the obscure, confused surrounding world.

“ Do you know,” she said, “ you seem to be showing me something so—how shall I say it?—so obvious, something that must have been there always, and always understood, and yet, which I somehow see for the first time, and don't see quite clearly even yet. I can't make it out. I don't seem ever to have understood why certain things were good and others evil, nor why one should prefer the good ones. I don't seem even now to understand quite ; and still, of course, I've always known one ought to do the good things unless one's a mean beast ; and I can't remember wishing to do them in order to please God, because I've never been religious really, and because I've always thought that God was so very unjust and unkind Himself in making people sinful and then minding, that I really didn't care whether He was pleased with me or not. Do you mean to say that everything that we call *wrong* hurts some one, near or far ? ”

“ My dear Lady Althea, you wished to do the things which were good because——”

But Baldwin stopped. He could not, while looking into her face, so calm, yet so eager with an eagerness quite above mere intellectual curiosity, say such a

platitude as that she was good—indeed, allude in any measure to herself.

“People,” he corrected himself, “wish to do good without knowing why, because they are of such a material that the pressure of mankind’s surroundings must mould them into such ways of feeling. But, to return. If we depended solely upon people’s own faculties for their good behaviour, there would be precious little of it. Whereas dozens of things which in our days do still depend upon an effort of reason, will become in time quite instinctive, mechanical, like our preference for soap and water, which is by no means inborn in humanity, but which has become quite automatic in us.”

Althea stooped, and gathered some of the little Parnassus daisies which whitened the boggy grass among the furze, and the tufts of yellow ragwort of that waste land by the northern sea.

“Yes,” she answered, after a moment’s thought, while her brother disappeared after the dog in the neighbouring sandy slopes, “I have no doubt that there is what you call spiritual progress in the world; and, of course, I see that it must be due to something. It is absurd to talk of mere growth in the abstract; plants and trees grow, don’t they, because they absorb more and more nourishment from the earth and air? Is it not so? Well, I suppose that folk’s conscience also absorbs something to make it grow. But don’t you see that just as every sort of soil doesn’t nourish every

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sort of plant, and some sorts nourish only weeds, or nothing at all, so also every human being doesn't influence his neighbour's conscience. It is a question of division of labour, don't you see? Some people are smiths, and others ploughmen, and others painters, or poets, or musicians; and some"—she added, with a laugh—"are creatures like us, who do nothing except sit waiting for rents, while their farmers try to grow turnips which *will* go wrong. And some, a very few only—you for instance—are moralists. Do you see?"

"That is exactly what I deny, Lady Althea. I maintain that we are all of us, more or less, moralists. The typical man, nay, the real individual, the man who is not an exception, and almost a monstrosity, is, in lesser degree only, everything which the specially gifted man is in greater. We are all painters, sculptors, poets, musicians, philosophers, statesmen; for, if we were not, the special painter, sculptor, musician, philosopher, etc., etc., would exist in vain, without a public which he could serve, or which could obey him. And the proof of this, the proof that we can receive spiritual gifts only if we already possess some portion of them ourselves, exists in the odd effect whenever such a special man is placed opposite a creature in whom there is no rudiment of the faculty which the special man possesses in high degree."

"You mean," interrupted the girl, "that if Jones goes to sleep while Rubinstein is playing, or Tompkins refuses to see the landscape which Turner is trying to

show him, it is not Rubinstein or Turner, but Jones or Tompkins, who is a monstrosity."

"Exactly so. Now, of all endowments sometimes specialized in individuals, few are necessarily so universal as what we call the faculty of the moralist. It is a faculty, this, which mankind exercises every hour of the day, even as it exercises its eye, its calculation of weight and velocity, its perception of character—those faculties of the painter, the mechanician, and the psychologist, without which every man-jack of us would be constantly running against a wall or a passer-by, or be crushed by carriages, or cheated by his servants. And the moral sense, the faculty of thinking 'what will be the result upon others?' is, I insist, even more necessarily essential than these."

They walked on for a little in silence, broken only by the questions of the boy, who wanted to know from his sister the name of every tiny plant, the reason for every effect of colour and light and shadow under that grey and yellow evening sky. The boggy pasture had grown more and more sere, and more broken-up everywhere by rabbit-holes, until it was replaced suddenly by the long grey flinty sea-grass, humping up with its thick slippery cushions and pale green horse-hair tufts, the sand-hills by the sea. A great place like a cattle pen, or some vague place of execution, an arrangement of posts and rails hung with brown nets and buoys, strewn the dunes with dry, papery bits of tail and fin, and shingle of scales, and delicate bits of bone. From

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below, and seemingly almost from underground, came the dull boom of the sea.

"Then," said Althea, "the reason you condemn those people—the funguses, you know—is because they don't interfere sufficiently with their neighbours, and because they live and let live; or, as you say, live properly themselves and let their friends live improperly?"

"Precisely—that is what I call accepting all the influence for good which the world, the past and present, can give; and declining to expend any such influence in return."

"I see. But then it all hangs together with some things you said yesterday, and which puzzled me awfully—about toleration being oftener a vice than a virtue. You wanted one to interfere with one's people's religious belief; you spoke almost like the man at the village kirk. I almost thought you were doing it to mystify those stupid visitors, and I thought it rather mean of you to do so. But do you *really* seriously think that toleration can ever be pushed too far? You see, Mr Baldwin, I've been working all these years to get to tolerate other folks' notions, and to get them to tolerate mine; and when one's naturally without much power of sympathy, and rather easily bored and sickened by one's fellow-creatures, and when one lives in Scotland of all countries, it's very difficult to become really tolerant; and it's too annoying to be told that, after all, toleration may be a vice." Althea

laughed as she spoke, half in earnest, half in jest. She had that faculty of seeing the exaggerated and gently absurd side of herself, which is characteristic of all the most really earnest, because the most candid, minds. "Now, logically speaking, if I can ever pretend to speak logically," she continued, "what is the use of trying to impose one's own views upon others? I know that you would think it your duty to interfere if you saw any chance of my turning Catholic, or High Church, or Esoteric Buddhist, wouldn't you? Well; what I want to know is what earthly value can my opinions have if they could be upset by Monsignor Capel or Madame Blavatsky? If my rationalism, as you call it, runs any such risk, it isn't real rationalism; it isn't organic, and what I believe or don't believe is a matter of no importance whatever."

"Not at all," answered Baldwin. "A belief—and I consider what the world calls unbelief as the most positive and absolute belief of any—a belief may not be sufficiently real, organic, not sufficiently the necessary original outcome of the individual mind, to resist logical or emotional attacks from a contrary belief: and yet it may be quite sufficient, while such attacks be averted, to produce one line of action, or action-producing feeling, rather than another. And this, in my eyes, is extremely important. There is a method of viewing things, of acting, which is Protestant, another which is Catholic, another, if you choose, which is *Blavatskian*, a fourth which is rationalistic; and among these various methods

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that one will tend to most practical good which is connected with a true view of the world rather than an imaginary one. Indeed, such non-vital, non-original, belief, due merely to tradition and circumstances, is the belief of the vast majority of mankind, not merely upon religious subjects, but upon all practical and speculative points, and very particularly upon questions of right and wrong ; nay, it is the belief of every living creature upon some one subject whereof he is not a master, but which may yet be connected with very practical results. And such belief, unoriginal, inorganic, produces therefore the vast bulk of the world's action ; and the more in conformity with ascertainable reality the belief, the less mischievous and the more useful will be the action which is based upon it. It is on such belief, therefore, and not upon the exceptional original, or at least organic belief, which pioneers and defends it, that depends the health of the world. It is, for this reason, quite legitimate to desire that such belief, when it happens to be in accordance rather with truth than with error, and productive in so far rather of good than of ill, should be defended from the possibility of being exchanged for another belief, not more organic, but less in harmony with fact, and less productive, therefore, of right action."

" I see," said Althea ; " but do you know, Mr Baldwin, that you are arguing rather like a member of the Confraternity of the Index or an official of the Holy Office ? "

" Of course I am," answered Baldwin, laughing ;

"but I consider that these estimable people are perfectly right in wishing to defend what they consider a safe, though wavering, belief. Their mistake consists in not seeing that even this is not worth buying at the price of the spiritual liberty or free trade to which every improvement in opinion is due. They don't perceive that truth is not discovered all at once, and that no one, therefore, has a right to say, 'No further inquiries permitted.' To return to what you call inorganic belief. Has it ever occurred to you that the moral ideas of mankind, what we call their moral instincts, are all of this sort? Few people could tell you the logical reason why murder, lying, and foul living ought to be stamped out. How many people have the faintest notion why clean living, for instance, is a virtue? They have been told that it is, and they have ended with feeling that it must be. To say of all this mass of non-original, non-organic belief that it is not worth preserving because it might fall a victim to sophistry or passion, is to say that an evil which may happen might as well happen."

"I understand," said Althea. "Do you know I have thought something like that myself, only I wasn't sure whether it mightn't be some of that usual wrong-headedness of mine which every one is always lamenting? You know the way that some people have of saying that if a man or woman can go to the bad, they may as well? Well, it seems to me that it makes an enormous difference to the happiness of others whether they do or do

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not actually go to the bad, whether evil potentiality be turned into evil activity. In fact, it seems to me that the very reason, and the sole one, for objecting to evil possibilities in people's nature is that the possibilities may become actualities. I don't know—and it may be because I've got my head screwed on the wrong way—but I can't help feeling that the only reason why I'd rather not have anything to do with a woman who *might* behave like a pig is that in all probability she *would* behave like a pig. Do you see ? ”

“ In fact, that if potentiality remained always potential (which is a contradiction in terms), there would be no reason to object to it, Lady Althea. Don't you see how that affects my argument about organic and non-organic beliefs ? ”

“ And do you know,” went on the girl, smoothing out a large black feather, dropped by one of the legions of cawing rooks which circled over cornfield and dune, “ one of the things that has always irritated me in religious people and religious books, is the fearful exaggerated importance they give to character as distinguished from action. They are perpetually thinking about their own souls, that is to say, about their own selves, instead of thinking about other folks' wants and conveniences. What does it matter whether one's soul is nasty or nice, so long as one behaves properly ? ” Althea could not help smiling. She perceived, even as she spoke, how much she disliked nasty souls in others, and how very much she would

dislike having one herself. And Baldwin thought, or rather felt, how singularly positive was the healthiness, the largeness, and beauty of the soul lodged in this large, fair, youthful body.

They paused for a moment on the ridge of the sand-hillocks. Inland, a great performance was preparing: on the low hills grey clouds were heaping up, rent by the sunset fire within; crimson live embers of cloud below, silver-white shining fire above. On the other side, pale and misty, lay the Forth, its trough filled with wan clouds, veined in the dim distance with the uprising smoke spirals of an invisible shore. From all sides, from hidden places, came the dull sound of the tide; and from over the distant hills, the cornfields, and heather came a cold breeze, which died out in a melancholy flutter among the pale, green-hued sea-grass at their feet.

"But see here," went on Althea, suddenly, "there are two things which you seem to overlook in preaching the necessity of good people not tolerating bad ones. In the first place—how shall I put it? Are not those bad people quite as much the natural product of the world as the good ones? You remember you told me I was quite right in thinking that we are born with certain tendencies and a certain will, and that therefore we aren't free as the religious people make out. Well, isn't what we call evil just as much part and parcel of nature, as much created by it, as good? And in that case, what's the sense of opposing it? I feel that I,

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personally, should try and oppose it, and so would all the people whom I think nice ; but somehow it doesn't seem very logical on our part. That's one difficulty. The other is that it is so difficult, in a way, to realize that individual people do really represent, personify, evil ; do you know what I mean ? Do you remember when Desdemona asks Emilia whether there are such women ? Well, of course, we know there are, of course I know that I've met such women (you know one meets pretty well every sort of evil in *good society*), and yet it is very difficult to realize that they *are* wicked. One seems to be prevented from doing so by a weight of common man- or woman- hood, by the community of the human. Evidence may sometimes tally with evidence, a complete chain of cause and effect about the absent person, the abstract, almost. But let this semi-abstract creature come and stand before you, be more than a name merely ; and immediately, with the sense that this one also has arms, legs, features, eyes, a voice, can move and speak, nay, can understand your speech and meet your thoughts—with this sense that the creature is a creature like yourself, born of human parents, comes an incredulity, an impossibility of believing, or at all events of realizing in any way the belief. Do you know what I mean by the Desdemona feeling ? ”

“ I know it perfectly. We have it all, more or less, I fancy, for better or worse. And I think it says much in favour of our poor humanity, that the sense of its

being shared by a suspected evil-doer makes it difficult to believe in the evil deed : that we expect, in the doer of a monstrous thing, a monster, a creature with horns and a tail, whose ferocity or filthiness shall seem in the right place. But does it not strike you, my dear Lady Althea, that this second remark of yours almost answers the first ? And does not this show plainly, not merely that the bulk of mankind is good, but that the bulk of the individual, even of the individual sinner, may be good also ? There is, speaking metaphorically, such a preference for good, such an impetus to the right, in all things—or rather what we call good and right means merely going with the grain of nature—that we unconsciously recognize that existence almost implies a greater amount of what is right and good, than of what is wrong and bad ; even as physical survival implies that more organs are healthy than diseased. Thus, as men of science are beginning to think, the through and through criminal is well-nigh the maniac, the result of physical degeneration of some sort ; so that one might say that the completely diseased soul scarcely exists at all, is dead socially, a mass of inert putrescence.”

Althea’s eyes had widened out once more with that singular transfiguring light. “ But is not this theory of yours,” she said with some hesitation, “ too dangerous to be true ? Would it not lead, like the theories of those Christians, or rather of those modern pessimists whom you dislike so much, to saying, as your friend

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Marcel said of his wicked heroine, 'C'est un pauvre être qui souffre' ? ”

“Not so, but quite the contrary. My recognition of the fact that evil of the worst can co-exist with human qualities sufficient to stagger us with the sense of a common humanity, merely strengthens my conviction that we must not weigh how much of normal, and, so to speak, inevitable, good may be co-existing with abnormal evil ; that we must not ask, ‘What is the value of this soul taken as a whole ?’ but resolutely look the evil in the face, and examine how far this evil is damaging to mankind, to what extent this creature is responsible therefore—that is to say, conscious thereof and consciously capable of renewing it. In the presence of such evil as actually disintegrates society, as absolutely puts us out of working order, the good qualities which the criminal shares with the innocent must not count for anything, any more than do the good qualities of a bushel of wheat which has had poison sprinkled in it. Is the wheat, as wheat, less nourishing ? Certainly not ; but while the wheat nourishes the poison kills. Just as disease,” continued Baldwin, “is that condition of the body which is at variance with the tendencies of physical nature, so also is vice that action of the individual which is at loggerheads with the movements of society. You say that evil, like good, is a natural product. Undoubtedly. But remember that the world excretes evil : it is necessarily produced, but also necessarily thrown off. It is that

with which the order of things cannot work ; although, in the work, frequently produced."

They had come to higher sandbanks, covered with even longer and more wiry matting of sea-grass, below which lay a narrow strip of untrodden pale-brown sand, and beyond, a wan, misty, great, brown smooth expanse, with a long line of posts and fences, hung with nets, stretching this way or that like a delicate, bony hand into its midst : the sky, the sea, the opposite coast, and the clouds, all the same colour, the same texture, equally pale and impalpable, scarcely divided by a line of palest brown where the tint of the sea seemed to reinforce on the horizon. The black boats, moored by the sand, seemed to be floating and rocking in emptiness.

A flock of curlews dotted the more distant sands with sharp black spots like bits of broken spar ; moving, vainly raising themselves for an instant on their wings, with subdued yet penetrating little squeals—" a litany of sad little words," said Althea, " in honour of this sad, sad, pale sea ; the list, one might fancy, of the drowned men below." Then there came down, white, whirling, with louder quacking noise, a flight of sea gulls.

" They complain also," said Althea, as she sat on the sand-hill with her little brother's head on her shoulder ; " everything complains in this northern country—every bird and beast, from the bleating sheep to the squealing plover ; I suppose of the short-

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livedness of the summer, the bitterness of wind and sea. But these seem to be complaining of their own concerns, their hunger and weariness, while those black curlews down there on the wet sand complain of something quite impersonal, the general misery of the world."

"I am so glad you told me those things," said Althea, after a few minutes' silence; "but I don't see how you make your theory that evil is excreted by the world square with things you have said before, about Nature being, as indeed I think every honest creature must admit, so very far from kind or just."

"That Nature excretes evil," answered Baldwin; "that there is in her a force making rather for health than for disease, is to be taken in reference to man's relations to man, not to man's feelings for Nature. In saying that evil is excreted by Nature, I do not mean to make out Nature one whit more amiable; I do not wish to argue myself into a belief that Nature is good. I wish merely to find an additional reason for the goodness of man."

II

Next morning was a Sunday, with Sunday in the feel of all things: a grey morning, earlier in impression, fresher than the hour warranted, owing to the rain in the night; and with that particular stillness of the

fields which is brought home to one by the sound of a solitary church-bell.

"It seems, does it not," said Althea, drawing up the pony on the crest of a hill, to look down on the greyish green pastures dotted with sheep, and the corn-fields which the breeze shivered with the patterns of watered silk—"it seems as if it could not have been there a couple of hours ago—as if it had never existed before ; as if there could be nothing in the world except the fields and sheep and trees, and us intruding on to it all. The other people—the minister and the people who will be at church—don't exist yet, do they ? "

She laughed, a funny, half childish laugh, after a moment's concentration of the vague dark eyes, and a little quiver of the mouth, as she turned her face full to Baldwin ; a charming creature, with that supreme charm, somewhat like that of this fresh, new morning, of never having felt except for others, of being absolutely unruffled, unsinged by passion.

"That isn't what I wanted to talk about," she said, urging on the pony. "I have been thinking over what you were saying yesterday, Mr Baldwin. And do you know, opening a book of Ruskin's before breakfast just now seemed to make me understand quite well all about the importance of people's belief, even if inorganic, and about different beliefs making you feel and think on quite different lines. I used to wonder formerly at the extraordinary dulness and injustice of such a great, great, beautiful mind ; but now I understand.

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I see that, given a man who refers everything—how shall I express it?—well, to ruling principles of life and thought (as distinguished from a creature who thinks only in a scrappy way), it was quite impossible that Ruskin's particular religious notions shouldn't have made him see a great many things all wrong. That religious education, that habit of always looking for what they call a *spiritual meaning* everywhere, made him explain things by mere allegories; as if allegories always corresponded with reality. You remember how he explains the fall of Venice, which must have been due to very practical causes, some change in the commerce of the world, or something similar, by mere allegories, or coincidences about the figures on the doges' tombs? And it's that habit of looking at everything through religious spectacles which makes him say that the art of the fifteenth century is base, because sculptors carved only as much of a figure's face as could be seen, which he considers immoral; when the question of artistic baseness has nothing to do with morality or immorality. But the worst of it is, don't you think, when he imagines that because people built cathedrals so and so, and that building so and so is what he calls moral, they must have been infinitely more disinterested and purer than people who didn't build cathedrals in that particular way, and especially much more so than we are. Of course one knows that there are shoals of mean, nasty creatures nowadays; but it makes one indignant, don't you think, to be told that the pollution

of a river with factory refuse (doubtless because of some new process of dyeing or bleaching which hasn't yet been properly regulated) is symbolic of the moral condition of a time and country in which decent living is thought more of than elsewhere and in other times."

"What you say is so true," answered Baldwin, "that, owing to the false beliefs with which people have been saturated, the moral safety of mankind has frequently depended upon its power of being illogical; or at least of neglecting the lesser logic in favour of the greater; of overlooking the mere concatenation of abstract ideas springing from a theory in favour of that concatenation of practical facts, of really existing cause and effect, which we call life. Did you ever read the description of the Sacrifice to Moloch in Flaubert's 'Salambô'? Well; given the belief that God cursed all mankind for the fault of one man and one woman, and appeased His wrath by the sacrifice of His only begotten Son, the logical conclusion should have been, not Christianity, but that Moloch worship of Tyre and Carthage. But a conflict existing, man averts his eyes from this logical sequence in the abstract region, and considers the logical sequence in the practical, which tells him how of the better course comes the better, of the worse the worse; and the voice of God, who is logically Moloch, bids him love his brethren and return good for injury. The really logical religious mind, on the contrary, the rigid one which will not sacrifice the abstract to the concrete, denies the fact to save the

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theory ; and becomes committed to a strange optimism which is a refusal to admit that evil is evil, or an attempt to call it good : the satisfaction of one of your seventeenth century preachers in the brimstone of hell, or the aspirations of some mediæval Hintonian after primæval promiscuity of all things. Now, had there not been in this case that bias of perhaps quite inorganic religious belief, there would have been no conflict between theory and practice, no necessity for sacrificing either logic or instinct."

Althea had driven the pony down the steep paved lane, between the red-roofed cottages of the fishing village. When they had left the cart at the inn, the girl helping to unbuckle the harness with her strong white hands, they strolled down to the little harbour, until it would be time to climb up to the kirk, where Baldwin had whimsically asked to be taken. The harbour was quite deserted because of the Sabbath ; the herring boats were moored close together, guarded only by the usual barking dog ; their brown sails and nets and big gourd-like buoys hung out to dry. On a patch of meagre grass some large nets were spread out on poles ; the poles, some straight and some crooked, and the nets, here bulging out, there tightly strained, forming between them a sort of grotesque spider's web galley, as Althea pointed out, sails set and prow tilted upwards, as if starting for some fantastic, lunatic seas.

"Doesn't it make you think of what you were saying about people's theories ? " she asked ; "and aren't we

all of us going off to sea in a gallant ship made of nets and poles, with a cobweb hull and a rigging of thread ? ”

“ Very much so indeed,” answered Baldwin, laughing ; “ and that’s what I’ve been arguing all along, my dear Lady Althea. We are very odd creatures, we ordinary mortals, when we come to think of it, and not at all so different from the people who hunted the Snark or went off to sea with the Teapot and the Quangle Wangle. We look at a threepenny bit, before accepting it or passing it on to our neighbour, lest it should prove false ; but we never dream of doing as much by our opinions, and accept those and pass them on, false or not false as may happen. There is nothing more astounding than the sort of childlike profligacy which exists in what I should call the region of intellectual morality. Why, there isn’t the most trifling detail of housekeeping or dress about which even the best of us are not infinitely more careful than about the principles upon which all our conduct in life is founded. People have scarcely any notion of making the best either of their brains, or their means of information, or of their moral impulses. As to the latter, they are continually being wasted or turned to actual mischief for sheer want of easily obtained knowledge. Every day I am more and more struck by the fact that the most devoted and enthusiastic creatures are usually the most unthinking and prejudiced, merely because they have never been taught that intellectual responsibility is a necessary part of moral responsibility. They judge and act in



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the dark, and even when they do no practical mischief, they serve to fatally discredit the cause they are advocating."

Althea nodded. "I have noticed that myself," she said, "particularly in relation to your cousin Dorothy. I think Dorothy quite the noblest woman I have ever met; and yet her enthusiasm only makes me feel inclined to cry, just because I understand why it might make other people laugh. I remember the difference there was between discussing moral questions, whether nice women ought to tolerate immoral men, and all that, with Dorothy and with my sister-in-law, Helen, who is a good, clean-minded creature, but with no more enthusiasm than a pint pot. Well, my sister-in-law's arguments seemed to have just twice as much moral value, because she knows the world, has seen evil and knows how insidious it is, and how easily mixed up with good; whereas poor Dorothy expects what you call horns and a tail."

They stopped for a moment, and leaned upon the parapet of the pier, looking at the sky and sea: the grey sea framed in, separated from them by a line of black rocks, jagged, wicked, with wicked plague-spots of yellow lichen and seaweed in their hollows: rocks crouching, claws and teeth sharpened, ready to tear and kill. It seemed strange, as the girl pointed out, that anything so solid as these black rocks should grip that ungraspable sea, that delicate dimness with only a scarce visible bar of palest brown to separate it from

the dim, grey, melting sky. Strange, also, how anything so evil as those rocks could embrace, much less imprison, this delicate loveliness. But this diaphanous grey sea loveliness may be evil itself. . . . The tide was slowly coming in ; and, as it did so, the water broke itself into long strands (like yarn on the posts of a rope-walk) and gathered itself into fibrous cables, currents along which its atoms were hurrying landwards, doubling the semicircular promontory ; a wicked steely blue where they chased round the rocks, gradually growing (or rather reappearing from behind the head-land) pale, diaphanous, dim, a grey made up of all the delicate pinks, and blues, and browns of creation, in the open space of the sands. The sky hung loosely over the sea : dark, watery clouds melted away here and there to mere smoke wreath ; and its darkness heightened the steel-blue of the impetuous on-pushing current, and made wanner the wan, white pallor of the part merely heaving with the tide. The movement of those rushing dull-blue bars was gradually communicated to all the rest ; the sea was divided all over into watery strands, paler or darker, but grey always, and dim, till at last its surface seemed to bear in the distance strange things, floating raft-like ; the waters dividing into fantastic mirages of wan coasts, pale wintry meadows watered by wide-shining streams, dunes, and lagoons. . . . Then, with the falling of the first scant raindrops, everything subsided into uniformity under the loosely hanging dark sky.

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They clambered back through the village, to the hill where the little Gothic church, its steeple well drawn in between its shoulders, seemed to project as little as possible on that bleak green shore, squatting, burrowing for fear of the wind among the grass of the little graveyard. As you approached you saw through one wide mullioned window the shadowy mullions of the window opposite, and the outer light beyond, as if you were looking into a church filled with pale sea water, filled with the atmosphere surrounding the ghosts of the drowned; an eery effect which reminded Althea, as she told Baldwin, of the story of the village tailor who looked out one winter night and saw a ship go suddenly down, sink straight till all her masts had disappeared, and her crew had bubbled up again, a rapid vision; and also that further along the coast is Aberdour, outside whose port, full fifty fathoms deep, "lies gude Sir Patrick Spens, with the Scots Lords at his feet."

"I want you to tell me some more. It seems somehow all to hang together with what you said about those fungus people. But I don't clearly understand," said Althea, as they waited in the porch till the congregation of Scandinavian-looking fishing folk had all gone in; "tell me more about the threepenny bit which we examine, and the opinions which we don't. It never struck me before that what people call self-culture was anything except a selfish question; do you mean to say that it matters much to others?"

“Certainly,” answered Baldwin, as he looked at her tall, majestic figure, standing out dark in the arch of the porch, framed in against the background of pale green grass, of white sky and sea. “Certainly self-culture, in the right sense of the word, is not the cold and selfish thing you imagined. In our day, when the world is crying out for renovation, when instincts for good are everywhere groping in the dark ; when beliefs and aspirations are struggling blindly all round ; nowadays when effort and explanation become more imperiously necessary hour by hour—it behoves each of us to be, to the best of his power, in working order, in marching trim. The practical solutions of the great social questions which mean misery or happiness—perhaps not for this generation nor the next, nor the next after that. But whether those solutions will come, and how and when, depends upon us and our immediate successors. It behoves every individual, therefore, to acquire to the utmost a general lucidity of mind, a power of reasoning correctly, of sifting away prejudice and falsehood, so that all new theories may be understood and judged at their value. And besides this general lucidity of mind, it behoves us all to acquire a well-organized system of knowledge, into which all new facts may be fitted, obtaining at once their real value and bearing, coming at once into contact, direct or indirect, with all similar facts, and thus eventually with our theories and practice of life. But this is only one half ; we are bound to be in morally working order

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as well: to accustom ourselves to sympathize, to renounce, to aspire; in order that we may understand and be just, that we may, when the moment comes (and it comes with every reform and improvement), sympathize thoroughly, renounce easily, and inevitably move upwards. The gospel remaining still unpreached is that of our duty towards our own mind, and consequently towards the mind of others, the gospel of lucidity."

Althea's brown eyes had widened out with that curious light. But she merely smiled. All this seemed to her, educated in sceptical indifference to all things, beautiful, but far-fetched and futile: a sort of delightful impractical poetry.

"You are like a priest," she said; "come in and hear what your rival, the minister, has to say."

"If he speaks out his convictions, I respect him from the bottom of my heart," answered Baldwin, with his hand on the door, "and that is more than I can say of most of us rationalists, myself frequently included."

The church of drowned men, as Althea called it, was built without an apse, a dreary, lop-headed edifice, more like a gallows than a cross; and its granite pillars and mullions were grown yellow with weatherstain and lichen. Against the dead, dull grey wall, where had once stood the altar, was the pulpit. The minister, a gaunt deformed creature, with the shaven, warped face of a dwarf, spread his bulging black sleeves on the

red cushions, folding himself, so to speak, on to the big gilt Bible ; and looking, thus vaguely enthroned in the half light, like some strange squatting idol. The apseless church seemed to double the value of the voices which sang the hymns gravely, earnestly, all the pitches welded into a solemn medium, equally unlike the nasal bass chanting of Catholic priests, and that fretting, as with spots of white, of the Anglican choristers' treble. The sermon which followed was immense, argumentative, subtle, yet practical. The point of it was that on the greatest subject of all, God and the salvation of their soul, men and women are silent to one another ; discussing all other matters, inquiring into all other interests, but living in isolation of soul about this, brother with brother, father with children, husband with wife.

" Listen ; he says the same thing as you," whispered Althea to Baldwin, where they sat in an empty pew by the door.

In the dull moments of the sermon, and they were many and long, the girl opened a volume of Browning which she had brought with her for the purpose, and placed beside the Bible on the pew edge. The place was the end of the speech of Pompilia.

The asceticism, the earnestness of this service, the insistence on God, and our brethren, and our soul ; the absence of all mythology and liturgical juggling, of symbolical formulæ and mesmeric passes, like those of Catholicism and the sham Protestantism of to-day,

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impressed both Althea and Baldwin, and seemed to bring to fuller comprehension the often read words which they were reading. And of the two, perhaps, Baldwin felt the most. In the little bare church, with the minister's voice, between the grave singing of the hymns, booming out the necessity of spiritual brotherhood; under that wan sea light falling on the grey, lichen-stained walls and arches, he felt suddenly, by the side of this strange, sweet, strangely candid, and virginal grown-up child (the more candid and virginal for Heaven knows what insight into the rottenness of rich and idle society), the value of Pompilia, of Caponsacchi, as he had never felt them before.

"Do you remember those last lines of Pompilia's speech, Lady Althea?" he said, as they walked behind the congregation across the little green, treeless graveyard—

"Through such souls alone,
God, stooping, shows sufficient of His light,
For us in the dark to rise by: and I rise."

"Yes," answered Althea dreamily; "I was thinking of them also. It would be something rather worth doing, a real thing, don't you think, to be such a soul, even for a minute to anybody?"

They walked a long time in silence, merely looking about, or absorbed in thought, until they had got the pony harnessed once more, and the cart on its way. The storm had cleared off, and the sun was shining behind a thin film of white, raining down in great

whitish beams upon the high-lying cornfields and sheep-dotted pastures ; the sea lying pale, luminous, impalpable beneath, almost white, but tipped with shining facets where it was enclosed by the long deep-blue bar of coast and cloud. Pale, whitish still, but just suffused with blue in the open, where the blue Bass Rock seemed not so much to rise from, as to lie lightly upon, the surface of the water.

“ You see, Mr Baldwin,” began Althea, keeping her eyes fixed on the reins, as they rolled quickly along ; “ all that you say is well and good when applied to exceptional people . . . no, let me explain, I mean not merely particularly clever, but also particularly good people—the people that God stooping shows His light through, like Caponsacchi. These creatures are privileged, and their privilege, like all others, ought to imply an obligation ; they are rather stronger than their fellows, and are therefore bound to lend them some of their strength. But the great majority of people are in quite a different position ; they have just intellect and heart enough for their own needs, and they have absolutely no means of coming in contact with anyone save their nearest surroundings. If I do my duty, for instance, it affects, at the very most, two or three people ; indeed, not as many, for my family are out of touch with me and think me scatter-brained : the very utmost I can perhaps ever do, is to make Harry see things a little from my point of view, and lead a cleaner life than most boys ; but that’s merely because

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the poor little chap is so fond of me, and because we happen to care for the same books and pictures."

Baldwin could not help smiling, as he repeated to himself, "Through such souls alone" while the girl was earnestly trying to impress him with her utter unimportance.

. "Well, and don't you see, my dear Lady Althea," he said when she finished speaking, "that in influencing your brother you are influencing the world at large? We are, each of us, separate atoms, if you will; but we are atoms continually pressing upon each other; and the sum total of this pressure, transmitted unconsciously from creature to creature, is the world's movement. Let us suppose that you impress Harry with a sense of the possibility and duty of leading, though a man, a life as pure as is demanded of a woman. Do you not see, that even if Harry never attempt to convert to his ways a single one of his companions, he will influence nevertheless every one of them susceptible of influence, by showing such lads as are capable of clean living, that clean living is possible, is practicable, and is the result of being neither a curate nor a muff? Don't you see that you will have contributed, to the extent of several souls in all probability (for the life of Harry means the life of Harry's children), to the organization of a condition of general moral opinion such that only those who are born vicious need be vicious, while those who are born good may remain good?"

Althea did not answer, but Baldwin could see that her lip quivered a little ; she wished to believe, but she feared to do so.

“ But look,” she said after a long pause ; “ you cannot deny that even the greatest men can do little, very little, in this world. Think of men like St Francis, or like Robert Owen ; why, all their efforts have been engulfed by the brutality and selfishness of the world. And then tell me, but quite honestly you know, do you think it worth while for a quite unimportant individual to do the most that he or she can in a world where even the very greatest are comparatively powerless ? ”

Baldwin nodded. “ I see your argument ; and, at the first glance, the fact that, as you say, even the greatest men in this world can do little or nothing unless supported by the mass, does seem to diminish sadly, to cast a slur upon, the value of the individual. But look again and ask yourself the reason why the single individual, however great, is so comparatively weak ? It is because, in reality, the single individual is so strong : even the meanest, smallest, has an enormous weight and strength ; and without this weight and strength of each constituent individual, the crowd would be yielding for ever. It is because all men are strong, that no one man can force them ; it is because there is life and power throughout the mass, that the individual exception is virtually powerless. Are we unimportant because we are part of the mass ? But the life of the mass is our life, its strength

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is ours, its quality is our quality. And in this fact, dear Lady Althea, in the fact that we are the mass, and that such as we are, we, its component atoms, it also is—in this fact that so much of our goodness and happiness is due to others, and so much of their goodness and happiness will depend upon us, lies the reason why we must form opinions and apply them; the reason why we must not live and let live like our friends the fungus people—live honestly and let others live dishonestly.”

“Then every individual has a value? I hope it’s true,” added Althea pensively. “I do hope it’s true. You see it takes away that horrid feeling that life is all a sham, men and women merely so many puppets jerking idiotically about. It makes them real, somehow, real like all these things, real like the sea and sky and the grass and trees.”

The cart, as it whirled along, drove before it a swarm of twittering little birds, which settled, little brown bur-like blobs, on the hedgerows and hay-stacks; rising again on approach of the wheels, a perfect whirl of wings and of twitter, to alight again on the hedgerow or haystack beyond.

ORPHEUS IN ROME

ORPHEUS IN ROME

“IT’S curious,” said Baldwin, looking less into the reality of that Roman theatre than into the vague places of the past, “that one of the few remaining shreds of my old musical lore—for I could have talked about *Orpheus* by the hour together when you were a naughty little girl, dear Donna Maria, and I a big wool-gathering lad, indeed we should doubtless have had terrific Gluckist and Piccinist fights in the nursery—it’s curious that one of the few impressions remaining to me from my eighteenth century days should happen to be that of the original singer of this very opera—the man for whom Gluck composed his *Orpheus*.”

“Ah!” exclaimed Donna Maria, quickly; “tell us this minute. You wretched Baldwin, I thought that you were going to say that you had forgotten that you had ever cared for old music at all.”

Baldwin smiled wistfully, that new smile of his which affected Donna Maria like a sigh. He was, indeed, thinking how much he had altered, not merely since those distant eighteenth century days, but since much more recent times, since, almost, he had seen Donna Maria last. This dear little woman, with her charming conventional dresses and charming unconventional

movements, seemed as foreign to him as that music which had once said so much to his soul, and would now, he foresaw, say so little. She had herself become a sort of performance like this opera, an external, indifferent spectacle, with the rapid delightful variations, from frivolous chatter to learned theorizing, and from earnest intensity to childish self-ridicule, of her breezy, gusty, sunny nature.

“Well, yes, perhaps,” he answered, as the violins began to tune for the overture. “Perhaps I *have* a clearer impression of Signor Gaetano Guadagni—his name was Guadagni, and he was a Lombard like you, Donna Maria—than of myself in the days when I made his acquaintance in old music books and memoirs. It’s odd by what caprice one singles out some particular forgotten creature of the past; or rather by what caprice some particular ghost chooses to manifest himself and haunt. Anyhow, I used to see and hear Signor Guadagni whenever I turned over the pages of *Orpheus*, or when I hummed over any of its airs in my memory. Do you care to hear about my friend the ghost? I only wish I knew by heart some of Dr Burney’s Gibbonian sentences, rolling and rumbling like the coach that must have carried him to the opera. To begin with, my friend Guadagni appears to have been a most beautiful person, and a first-rate actor, sufficiently to induce Garrick himself to give him wrinkles. He had not a big voice—many of the greatest singers of that time, when singing was a great art, had not—

and he sang in a way of his own, preferring airs with slight accompaniments, long pauses, and few notes, like Gluck's. And these few notes he did not regularly swell and diminish like other singers—at least like other singers of his day, modelling passages with the breath—but, on account of his weak chest, took them at once with full voice and let them dwindle, fade, die away; notes and phrases, like an *Æolian* harp or an echo. Can't you imagine him sighing through those songs, with their constant little murmuring drooping closes, a sort of disembodied voice, a ghost among those ghosts in Hades and the Elysian Fields? But what used to strike me even more in the accounts of this man is, that as an actor, he seems to have been so precisely what is required in an opera, and particularly in an opera without much action, lyric rather than dramatic, like *Orpheus*. For they tell us that his acting was not merely passionate and pathetic, but extraordinarily good to look at. Old Burney says his gestures would have been 'excellent studies for a statuary;' and one comes away with the impression of unbroken succession, fluctuating and moving with the music, of beautiful and noble movements, completing in their spontaneity, and suggestiveness and charm, the sort of permeating poetry of the music and of the story, which has become, apart from its own beauty, redolent with the sentiment of all the poets who have repeated it, and all the ages that have listened. It is difficult to define in words what I feel to be the sort of acting

fit to accompany music, something quite different from the acting of a mere spoken play; movement and expression which shall obey the same necessities of measure and grace and nobility as the melodies themselves, and seem as spontaneous and inevitable and self-unconscious as the melodies on the lips of the singer. Think what Gluck's *Orpheus* must have been, performed in this way, all its poetry embodied by this great artist! Poor old Signor Guadagni," went on Baldwin after a pause, and laughing at his own enthusiasm for a singer he had never heard, "his end was pathetic. Instead of being run through the body or poisoned by some jealous husband, or exiled by the brother of some over-susceptible electoral princess, with the laurel wreath of *Orpheus* still on his brow, he had the misfortune of turning into a comfortable citizen of Padua, of growing quite old, and in his old age, childish. A certain young Lord Mount Edgcumbe whose family had adored Guadagni in England, went to call on him when on the grand tour, and found poor old Orpheus amusing himself with a child's puppet show—wasn't it comic and sad? And the saddest thing is that he's dead and gone, buried in a corner of Padua, and that we can none of us ever see and hear him."

"Who knows?" answered Donna Maria, with a little excited air of mystery. She had been listening with extraordinary interest, and (had Baldwin noticed it) with evident efforts to suppress a series of exclamations; and, towards the end of the little panegyric of

that long silent singer, she had communicated by looks and signs to their friend Carlo a peremptory order of discretion.

"Who knows?" she allowed herself to repeat. "There is evidently something uncanny about your friend Guadagni; and since he has had this caprice of haunting you, don't you think he may some day take the whim of reappearing to us all on earth?" But Baldwin had already relapsed into that listlessness which now seemed to have become his normal condition.

"I think," said Carlo, coming forward in the box, while the violins began tuning for the overture, "that it would be a great mistake on the part of this delightful eighteenth century spectre to reappear before Baldwin. It would be running the risk of a very cool reception; something like what happened to Heine's exiled gods, when they came back to find their temples consecrated to the Virgin and their groves used up as firewood. Baldwin doesn't care any longer for old music, any more than he cares—really and actively—for antique sculpture. In the interval of thinking about other things, of neglecting art for what he considers more practical concerns, Baldwin has become a modern."

Donna Maria furled her fan with a disputative eagerness dangerous to its Louis XV. workmanship.

"Baldwin has had congestion of the brain and malaria," she exclaimed, "if that's what you mean by becoming modern; and Baldwin has let all the dreadful things of the day—pauperism, and scepticism,

and the horridness of all classes, eat into his soul until he can't think of anything else, and can't enjoy any art, or any simple, pleasant thing."

"Pardon me, Donna Maria," replied Carlo, smiling at her warlike temper, "I maintain that the pre-occupation of all these horrid modern things—which interest me, truly enough, only for their psychological value—has resulted, not in making our friend indifferent to all art, but in turning him into a completely modern man, to whom all this classic art—the art of Phidias as well as the art of Gluck—can have an intellectual, historical value, but not the real artistic value of being the expression of his own soul, its aspirations, and wants, and weaknesses."

"But where's the pleasure of expressing all these wretched things?" began Donna Maria impetuously. But she stopped; for at that moment the first notes of the overture, the first crisp notes of that orchestra of violins, came rustling through the theatre as the wind which disperses the clouds rustles through the plumes of the mountain pines.

A few minutes later all discussion had been forgotten. For into the slowly unfurling chorus, drooping with grief, of the mourners about Eurydice's grave, there dropped unexpectedly, but with the slow directness of falling tears, four notes of an unexpected voice; and Orpheus was walking across the stage and ascending the steps of the tomb. Those four notes, carrying the name of Eurydice, belonged to a low soprano voice.

But instead of the disturbing fact of a woman dressed up as a man, they conveyed to the hearer, quite simply, naturally and irrefutably, the existence of a world of poetry and romance, and the presence of a demi-god. The slender creature, leaning against the side of the tomb, and arranging its garlands with listless fingers and eyes which looked not, was indeed a woman. One knew it in a second, but in a second also one had forgotten. And when, after dismissing the make-believe ballet shepherds and shepherdeses, all rouged and bewigged, Orpheus comes forward with the face and movement of a melancholy young faun, bewailing Eurydice and begging her back of the gods, that fifth-rate Italian stage, those cardboard trees and wooden rocks, had disappeared and a new stage taken its place, —a valley of Thessaly, made out of the rustle of violins, the quavering echoes of the solitary hautboy, and the fresh, cool notes of that young, supple voice.

“It is strange,” said Donna Maria, when the curtain had fallen at the end of the first act, “that one of the things we enjoy the most and applaud the most, this last air which he—I prefer to think of her as he—sings with such splendid voice and spirit (she seems to enjoy all those little runs and twirls, doesn’t she? or to do them because she’s happy)—it’s strange that that air shouldn’t be by Gluck at all, at least so they say. Is it true, Baldwin?”

“It’s quite true,” answered Baldwin. “That last air of the first act is by a man called Bertoni, by no

means a first-rate man in his day, and it got into the score of *Orpheus* by the caprice of some singer, and has remained in default of anything better. There is something pathetic, to me, in the survival of the song by a third class mediocre (I don't mean to say the song is not good), when the songs of Gluck's greatest rivals, Piccini, and Jomelli and Sacchini, have been utterly forgotten."

"I am glad, also, that Bertoni's air has stayed in," remarked Carlo. "It shows, by the fact of its not jarring with the rest, that Gluck, after all, was a man of the eighteenth century just like another. It ought to bring home to us what Donna Maria won't admit, that all this *Orpheus* music can never please us except as a resuscitation, that it may interest us, and even, once we are in the right frame of mind, give us a certain amount of pleasure, but that it can never become a reality in our spiritual life like Schumann and Wagner, and even like Grieg and Boito, because it isn't the product of our times and our own minds. I'm not speaking of the technical part of the matter; Gluck's orchestration is, of course, miserably thin compared with ours, but Gluck's songs, as technique, are, perhaps, better than our songs; and this accompaniment of nothing but violins, with an occasional hautboy, or harp, or horn, to play a little tune of its own, or to emphasize some special passage, is in its right place with those songs, so singable, so considerate for the voice, just as the one big instrument of shot and shimmering

sound, made up of fifty other instruments, which is our modern orchestra, is in its right place connected with the passionate declamation of our composers. Mind, I never once suggest that *Orpheus* is not a great and perfect work of art. What I maintain is that it is the work of a thoroughly bygone past, of a completely extinct art; and that, produced in utter unconsciousness of what the modern soul would be, it no longer answers to the wants of us moderns."

"But at that rate," exclaimed Donna Maria angrily, "you would cart off all art that we haven't made ourselves—you would renounce Homer, and Dante, and Raphael, and every ancient statue that was ever dug up!"

"I *do* renounce them," answered Carlo, composedly; "and I renounce most emphatically and particularly all those colonies of white, naked, motionless and emotionless men and women whom antiquity has devolved upon us: creatures with whose mentality, if they have any, we no longer have any connection, and whose bodily excellence we can appreciate only as a result of infinite study, and a study, observe, mainly of themselves, since all our ideas of comely nudity are taken from those self-same statues. And in the same way that an antique statue can be appreciated and enjoyed only through a study of antique statues, so, I maintain, an opera of Gluck can be enjoyed only as the result of a study of Gluck and Gluck's contemporaries. For I don't believe that the people

in this theatre, much as they may applaud, enjoy this music as they would enjoy, some of them, Verdi's *Trovatore* and others Wagner's *Tristan*. You must remember that all music, if decently performed, is rather enjoyable than not, just as any well-made statue is more interesting to look at than not, although a statue by Rodin may be more interesting to us than a statue by Phidias."

"What do you say to this, Baldwin?" asked Donna Maria, expecting that, as formerly, her old friend would make short work of all modern heresies.

But Baldwin seemed unwilling to be drawn into the conversation.

"I think," he said, "that there is considerable truth in what Carlo says. Only, as regards the antique, I must remind him that we enjoy no sort of art, no sort of beauty whatever, without a certain apprenticeship. The modern man may eventually be more interested in a *Dame de Comptoir* by Manet than in a *Madonna* by Raphael; but he will be interested in neither, at least as a work of art, without a certain previous habit: people require to be taught how a wall covered with posters really does look from a certain distance quite as much as how a naked arm bends in a certain action; in fact, antique sculpture has half taught them the one and modern painting has not yet taught them the other, since they usually maintain that modern painting tells lies. Oh, no, previous apprenticeship does not tell against any art's real power: we all require a little

time to see the beauties of any new sort of landscape ; we appear to have required all the centuries of centuries to appreciate the charm of a grey sky and wet road. But, as to music, I confess there is a difference, due to the fact, that music does not imitate the things about us, and to the fact, also, that there is no time to keep vivid, to perform and re-perform all the various styles of all the various ages : such a performance as this is necessarily exceptional, and it is a resuscitation. The question remains : Are we restoring life to a thing that can live, or are we galvanizing a corpse ? I have cared too much for this old music, and I now care too little for music of any kind, to be able to answer."

" Oh, that malaria, that malaria ! " exclaimed Donna Maria, " not the physical malaria merely, but the spiritual one, all the horrible preoccupations which either make modern folk utterly ill, like the air of an ill-managed hospital, or drive them to live off intellectual drugs, absinthe and opium and haschisch, and heaven knows what filthiness besides, like Carlo's little pessimists and *décadents*."

" Absinthe or haschisch or opium, if you will," answered Carlo, with the enthusiasm of a neophyte, " or even, if you will, curare, that drug which strings up to agony the nerves of sensation and paralyzes the nerves of action. I never said that the art of modern times is milk, or wine and water, or the vermouth and quinine you make us drink against fever after our drives in the Campagna. But, poison or not poison,

this modern art has spoilt us, with its acrid flavour, its heady strength, its visionary fumes, for any art like this. We may drink of this clear stream of Gluck's music, and say, 'Oh yes, very good water, quite delicious, and, doubtless, free from every kind of deleterious matter,' but our soul is still athirst, and we run back to Wagner and Schumann, and even to Grieg and Fauré."

Again Donna Maria's anger was interrupted by the rising of the curtain; or, rather, diverted from Carlo's *décadent* æsthetics to the extreme badness of the *mise en scène*, to the rows of Father Christmases and ladies in grey waterproofs, who bellowed and gesticulated as unhappy shades at the gates of hell, and the chains of thick thighed and tight waisted furies who capered about in the rose-coloured Bengal light.

"Listen, Baldwin," she whispered, quickly turning round and presenting her back to the stage, "but for heaven's sake don't look till you're told."

Suddenly, close upon the rattle of that chorus, surging and sinking like the angry but impotent sea upon the beach, came the thin weak notes of a harp, and the notes, clear and fresh, but imploring and helpless, of that voice of a young god of the woods; beaten back and returning to implore, till the chorus of the wardens of hell, growing slower and fainter, waxing surprised and compassionate, at last gave way, and bade the gates of Hades roll back on their hinges.

"Now, look, Baldwin!" whispered Donna Maria.

The crowd of demons and spectres had fallen asunder,

and down the rocky path leading into Hades, came Orpheus, triumphant but terrified. The light of our earth, filtered wan through the rocks, made a blue and ghostly halo round his head, bleaching the gasping lips and the tremulous hands, and turning to silver the strings of his lyre and the laurels of his crown ; while, as he descended, with precipitous steps and long, frightened pauses, the red vapours of hell caught the embroideries of his cloak, licked the hem of his tunic, and wavered in strange splendours of ruby and gold all round him.

“ Ah ! ” exclaimed Carlo, with suppressed enthusiasm, “ that is a figure, all glittering with mystic jewel-lights, for one of your great pre-Raphaelite painters, or for Gustave Moreau.”

The chorus, now pealing out a welcome, began to grow faint and fainter, it would seem, before the presence of the victorious mortal, and Orpheus, with a bound, descended from the rocks ; descended, but only to stagger and cower, while the light of earth and the light of hell mingled in strange effulgences about him ; overcome by the terrors of below, made dizzy and faint by the sudden granting of his prayer. Then, raising the beautiful arm which was shielding his dazed and deafened young head, he flung it joyfully in the air, and grasping with the other his lyre, rushed forward to the fiery portals, his face changed from terror to triumph.

“ Good heavens, how grand ! ” exclaimed Carlo, forgetting all his theories about the insufficiency of

old music, and joining Donna Maria in a fit of wild clapping.

For a little while they did not speak. Carlo sat humming the air of the last chorus at the bottom of the box, rapping out its metre on his chair back as if it had been composed to-day, instead of a century and a quarter ago; and Donna Maria was watching the effect it had produced on Baldwin, until, disappointed with his apparent listlessness, she suddenly clutched his hand and asked,—

“Well, Baldwin, and do you no longer care for old music?”

Baldwin laughed. “What is the name of this singer?” he merely asked.

“Helen Hastreiter,” answered Donna Maria.

“Did you think,” asked Carlo, “it might be the ghost of Signor Guadagni?”

II

“Yes,” answered Baldwin; “I have spent the whole morning at the Vatican; and what is still more satisfactory—at least with your classical intentions—I have fallen in love with a little marble Muse.”

Donna Maria affected him, at that moment, as a creature infinitely charming but decidedly comic, a child to whom you could talk only nonsense and tell only fairy tales. She had driven up to fetch him, in visiting splendour, with liveries and prancing horses, and stated

that it was quite indispensable she should pay a dozen calls or leave a score of cards. Then, with an exclamation, a little crow of delight, at the spring wind and gleams of sunshine, she had announced that it was far more indispensable to walk on the grass in Villa Borghese; and, scattering the cards all over the carriage, had seized Baldwin's hand and said: "I want to speak to you very seriously. I saw you again at *Orpheus* last night. And you were at the Vatican this morning?"

"Aren't you satisfied with me for having fallen in love with my Muse—I forget what she's the Muse of; at all events, neither of political economy nor of pessimistic philosophy."

"I don't know," said Donna Maria gravely, as the carriage rolled into the yet empty park. "I want to know whether you are serious, Baldwin. I want you to be in earnest a little, for I have been thinking of very serious matters."

"Not the calls you ought to be making, and the serious results of your delay, Donna Maria?"

"Which of us is frivolous—you or I?" asked Donna Maria angrily. "Listen. I have been thinking all these days about what you said when we went to *Orpheus*, and what Carlo said about you. It doesn't matter what Carlo says about himself: he's only a boy, and he'll get bored with his pose of moroseness and decadence soon enough; besides, he enjoyed *Orpheus* tremendously, and said so afterwards quite simply, as if he hadn't been pretending the contrary the whole time, dear

creature. But it's different with you, caro Baldwin. If *Orpheus* bores you, if you find that all the beautiful things you cared for are merely so many cast aside toys of yours—if all that is true, and remains true, then things are going very badly with you, poor Baldwin. If it's true, then you may as well give up worrying about pauperism, and pessimism, and your responsibilities and everybody else's; you won't do any good, for your mind will be in just as bad a state as the rest of the world, and it won't be you who can improve matters. Don't interrupt and say that in order to be of any use one must be stirred up, one must even have been sickened by things—I know that perfectly; it's logical. But in order to help to remedy matters, one must get over that condition of nausea; one must be sound in all one's feelings, and perceive things as they are, without exaggeration or sickness. You used to tell us so yourself; you can explain these things much better than I. Only you seem to have forgotten it; perhaps because you've worried too much and been ill. And the use of me is to remind you. I haven't brains like you, and can't explain *why* one ought to love classic things, and be, in a way, classic in one's life; but I'm somehow constituted in such a way that classic things please me, and I prefer being healthy-minded and natural; and I feel that those ancient people and Goethe were right, that they were going with the grain of Nature, doing like the trees, and the sunshine and the wind—do you understand?—and I

feel young, and am determined to remain young, even at eighty ; and all the rest of you are growing old, and being pleased with growing old. That's why I mind about Orpheus and the Vatican ; I can't analyze it deeper."

Baldwin was listening attentively, although he could not help smiling at the earnestness in that dear, childish face, with something of a Luini's angel in its irregularity. It seemed so natural now to be back with her, experiencing the fluctuations of this warm, gentle, gusty nature, which shook you into quicker life, and warmed you into momentary happiness, like the capricious wind and sunshine of that Roman spring among the leafless acacias, the solemn ilexes.

"You are quite right, dear Donna Maria," he answered. "I have been ill, in spirit as well as in body ; but I have known that I was ill ; I have regretted it, I have longed to be my old self again ; you see, I mind the evil of the world too much to enjoy being a pessimist. And I have associated this state of illness with the indifference which I feel, or have felt, for the art I once cared for. Do you think I was happy the other night, when I thought that *Orpheus* was going to be nothing to me ? But let me tell you about this morning in the Vatican. Do you know, I often wondered, on my way back to Italy, how I should be affected, after two months of illness among that foreign, silent, Oriental art, by a return to the familiar things of antiquity. I remembered that a double-headed

Janus, with archaic rows of curls and narrow smiling eyes, had given me a little pang of recognition and pleasure when I had met him unexpectedly on the fountain of a Moorish palace at Seville. Then I went to Naples. The museum there struck me with a sense of the familiarity of antique things, but the familiarity akin to indifference and contempt. All this art, with its extraordinary excellence of inherited skill, seemed inane and in a way vulgar ; all those flourishing, well-built, naked bodies, overwhelmed me with an impression of dulness and commonness, almost of low breeding. They seemed to talk in a loud, emphatic way, and yet to say nothing. I longed for some far-fetched allegoric creature, a feeble lived hybrid, between the Middle Ages and the nineteenth century, by Burne Jones or Burne Jones's pupils, a creature with a wistful face and dubious anatomy. I suspected that I must be growing into what Carlo calls a modern : one who cares for art only as a mirror of his own personality. But it has turned out quite differently. You will laugh ; but I am really quite childishly pleased that the Vatican this morning was not the Naples Museum all over again ; I really enjoyed myself there tremendously."

Donna Maria had rudely broken into the middle of Baldwin's speech, by jumping up with a "Stop, stop !" to the coachman, as she recognized in a neighbouring path a friend's smart nurse and baby. She made no apology for her interruption, but, bending over the back of the carriage, kneeling on the seat,

sent out her deep, warm voice in a big "O caro, caro!" at the sight of that fat, pouting creature, of all that lump of soft pink flesh and soft blond hair. Then she turned again to Baldwin, and listened very attentively.

"I really enjoyed myself so much this morning," he went on. "I liked it all, as I used to when I was a lad, and believed that 'beauty is truth, truth beauty, that is all we know on earth,' and all we need to know, and all the rest of it. I liked the sarcophagi with the big masks gaping upon them, the porphyry baths and the water sparkling in the fountains; I liked the innumerable inferior little marble people, fauns and athletes and Venuses by no one in particular; I liked their being so clean-limbed and cheerful-minded, and I liked the quantities of them all about."

"Now why does one like them?" suddenly burst out Donna Maria, stopping the carriage and springing out where the marble horses splash in the big central fountain. "Why does one like them, not merely admire them, you know, and why does one know that it's right to like them?"

"But some people don't like them, Donna Maria. I didn't like them at Naples, and Carlo says that it's only habit and conventionality that makes us pretend to like them at all."

"That's it," she answered triumphantly, watching the water, which plashed green among the hoofs of the sculptured horses, their manes grown golden with age and lichen—"that's just it. Why do we know

that you must have been morbid when you disliked the antiques at Naples; and that Carlo's moderns must be horrid, dreadful creatures, if the antique does not please them? I have thought of it very often, and now I know why. The explanation is the same as why do we know that people are morbid—unless they are utterly stupid—who do not enjoy, but in a way much stronger than mere admiration, the sight of clouds moving about like to-day, and branches bending, and water spirting like this fountain? Look at those trees in front of us," she continued, pointing with her parasol to a group of slender bays shooting up their clustered boles from the short anemone-starred turf. "We admire them, but we do something more, for we admire also anything that is well done, a horrible sonnet of Baudelaire and a dreadful Spanish saint by Zurbaran, for instance."

"We like their being beautiful; isn't that enough?" suggested Baldwin, as they wandered under the tunnel of twisting ivy branches, black and scaly like rhinoceros trunks, at whose end a little circular temple gleamed white in the fitful sunlight.

"Not merely that, for morbid things are sometimes beautiful, and things which give one a certain disgust: the blood, for instance, welling out of Regnault's decapitated Moor. You don't understand what I mean. We like this moving sky, and this rushing wind, and we like these trees, with a kind of sympathy for the life, the health, the strength that is in them. We

recognize in the trees, in the way in which they grip the ground with their roots, and shoot out their branches, and poise and push forward their leaves, the sign of life, something that says 'this is the way that Nature prefers,' something like what we feel when we are young and healthy and strong. And it's the same with the statues: they may be good antiques, or bad antiques, but we recognize in them the kind of symmetry of body, the kind of balance of mind, the sort of life, in short, which goes with Nature's intentions, and to which we approach when we are sound and simple and good."

"But Nature's intentions," objected Baldwin rather sadly, "are sometimes that we should be weak and ill and worthless, that we should not strike strong roots or shoot out vigorous branches."

"Yes, but then Nature gets rid of us as quick as she can. Of course, she does often produce weak and miserable things, but she doesn't like them, so I suppose she produces them because, somehow or other, she can't help herself," answered Donna Maria, with an easy Pagan tendency to personify. "And that's the reason why I wanted you to enjoy yourself at the Vatican today. It's a sign of spiritual health."

"What a Greek you are, Donna Maria," laughed Baldwin, as they sat down on the steps of the amphitheatre, watching the red and black seminarists playing at football on the grass beneath the pines, and the lizards darting among the dwarf marigolds and sprouting vetches among the stones.

"I don't know about that," mused Donna Maria, drawing patterns with her parasol. "I shouldn't have liked the Greeks for many things, I daresay. Perhaps they weren't what I call *Greek* in everything, either. And, after all, every art, at one time or another, whenever it has cared for beauty very much, has been Greek in that sense, however little like Greeks people may have been at that time. Titian is in so many things, and Giorgione in that pastoral with the people playing under the trees, and Gluck's *Orpheus* is Greek, though Gluck wore a horsehair wig and took snuff. It's very odd to think he took snuff."

"You have come just in time," cried Baldwin to Carlo, as the young man, who had followed the carriage from the gate, came up breathless across the grass. "Donna Maria has been explaining in what consists the healthiness of the antique, of the classic, and why we all care for it when we are healthy. Now you may explain once more why no sincere modern can care for it at all; and why no sincere modern can take any but an historical interest in Gluck's *Orpheus*, to hear which, by the way, I learn that the sincere modern *yourself* has been already five times."

"Oh, bother historical interest, and classicism, and modernness!" exclaimed Carlo, throwing himself on to the steps of the hippodrome, one arm under his head, and his eyes fixed upon the ever changing sky, where moist blue patches and loose grey cloud wreaths chased each other in the west wind. "We are all classic on a

day like this and in a place like this. Look at the bay trees bending in the wind ; look at the dear lizards darting about, and the red and black Etruscan beetles among the acanthus leaves (one has just run up my sleeve, bless him !) ; listen to the south-west wind in the pine branches and in the ilex trunks. There ! those are the pines, a rustle ; they are the violins and the tenors. And the hollow ilexes—do you hear ?—quite different ; those are the violoncellos and double-basses, with every now and then a big thump of a kettledrum when a branch is snapped. And there's the scent of the bay leaves ; the sun has half baked them already, and the melting resin of the pine trunks. How good ! And there's something else, too. Ah, it's the pale yellow jonquils in your dress, Donna Maria ! how right of you to bring them, since Nature hasn't had the sense to make them grow here. Did I say I was a modern ? How idiotic ! It was the red plush of the theatre seats made me think of it. Do you hear ? That's the overture of *Orpheus*—la, la, la ; ta, ta, ta ; ti, ti, ti—sweeping across the grass just now. And there's the first chorus—it's the ilexes do it ; don't you expect to hear those four notes—those beautiful middle soprano notes, like a viol—“ Euridice ”—dropping in ? Don't you expect to see Orpheus walk down the steps of the little temple there, with his head drooping and his hands hanging loosely, like the Antinous ? ” And Carlo, with his arms still crossed beneath his head, lying on the steps of the circus, sang

out, in his big bass voice, those famous four notes, "Euridice !"

Donna Maria and Baldwin began to laugh.

"Why do you laugh?" asked Carlo, interrupting his performance. "I am quite serious. I am classic, the trees are classic, the grass also, and the sky: the whole world is classic. You surely don't expect me to say that I am modern, do you?"

"It's all very well," exclaimed Donna Maria, suddenly digging her umbrella into a soft patch of green among the stone steps, "but I want to know why it all hangs together; why the day is classic, and the place, and why it all has to do with antique statues and Gluck's music, and the Hastreiter's acting? It's all very well for you not to care, Carlo; you who will say to-morrow that the classic is all horrid old rubbish; a mixture of plaster-of-Paris and hair powder, as you once put it. But *I* am always classic, so I am interested to know all about it. What makes things classic, Baldwin? What *is* being classic?"

"The classic," answered Carlo solemnly, contemplating one of his feet, balanced in the air as he lay there; "the classic is the ideal. As to the ideal why, the ideal is that quality which is noticeable in the classic. And it was all, somehow, invented by the late Plato—Euridice!"

"Be quiet, Carlo!" cried Donna Maria; "look here, I want to understand this, Baldwin—I understand that some things are classic because, as I told

you before, they seem to go with the grain of Nature, like these trees and this grass and this sky ; they seem to be living the life that is the most liveable ; the statues and Gluck's music and a lot of other things. Does it all come to 'beauty being truth, truth beauty ?'

"Oh, dear no?" exclaimed Baldwin; "that's only metaphysics; for there are two charming explanations of beauty, dear Donna Maria, as you doubtless know, each violently contradictory to each other, and each equally orthodox—indeed, æsthetic orthodoxy, like other sorts of orthodoxy, depends upon the conciliation of these two contradictory principles. One is that beauty is the ideal, which is explained to us as meaning the abstract, the something that does not exist outside the human mind; and the other, as Keats informs us, that beauty is truth, truth beauty, which, if it means anything, means that beauty is what does really exist. The result of which metaphysical view is that half the world, with Zola at their head, are perpetually expounding and demonstrating that truth is ugliness and ugliness truth. The fact is that beauty is a perfectly separate quality, or combination of qualities, given independent of truth, which, by the way, is a very relative quality itself. What the constituent elements of the impression called beauty may or may not be is a very long question, and a question which physiological psychology is much more likely to solve than mere speculative metaphysics; but be they

what they may, the impression or set of impressions called beauty is a specific, distinct matter."

"I understand that," answered Donna Maria; "but it isn't about beauty that I want to know, it's about the particular kind of beauty which we call classic, which I call classic at least—the sort of beauty of the antique and of *Orpheus*; but I needn't go over all that again. For there is another kind of beauty, just as beautiful, but which is *not* classic, which has nothing to do with a day like this, which does not make one feel that it goes with the grain of Nature. For instance, the beauty of the last act of Wagner's *Tristan*. It is beautiful, as beautiful as *Orpheus*, but it's a beauty that makes one feel not well, but vaguely ill."

"Oh," cried Carlo; "if you are going to apply hygienic standards to beauty, I shall go and perform first *Orpheus* and then *Tristan* on my piano at home."

"Do so," she replied contemptuously. "You see, Baldwin, I *am* hygienic; I *am* practical. So why shouldn't I apply hygienic standards to beauty? It is the only way of measuring its practical value in life."

Baldwin did not answer. He was struck by this simple remark, so simply given out by Donna Maria, who sat there among the fitful gleams of sunshine, like some little antique dryad—a thing more than usually connected with Nature—dressed out in fashionable visiting gear.

"Is the classic that kind of beauty which is hygienic?"

Yes, I stick to my expression, Carlo. Is it the sort of beauty which makes life easier to us ? ”

Carlo had straightened himself and was thinking. “ Yes,” he answered, instead of Baldwin, “ the classic is what you call hygienic beauty. It’s things as they should be, bodies as they should be, arms and legs and backs and heads as they should be ; it’s emotion as it should be ; and that’s why I return to my old theory. No sort of classic art can really thoroughly express, reproduce mankind as it is, because our arms and legs, and our thoughts and emotions, are *not* what they should be ; and that is why all classic art must necessarily be less intimately human, less potent ; in fact, less great than the modern art which is not classic, which gives us our bodies and our souls not as they should be, but as they are.”

Baldwin smiled at Carlo’s return to his theories. “ Euridice ! ” he sang under his breath.

Carlo understood the criticism. “ Well, yes,” he answered quite simply ; “ just to-day I am classically disposed. It’s the weather, and having heard *Orpheus* last night, and expecting to hear it again this evening ; I am happy, and I like things to be as they should be. But it is an individual mood, an individual moment. How often do you expect me to be in it ? ”

“ Very often—most often,” exclaimed Donna Maria angrily, “ considering how little you see of the miseries of the world, and how young you are.”

“ Less often, perhaps, for that reason,” said Baldwin ;

"when you are less young, and less free from painful thoughts, you will be less interested, perhaps, in the representation of the very things, the very imperfections which harass you; you will court the moments of feeling things as they should be, instead of things as they are."

"Perhaps!" exclaimed Carlo, indifferently, rising from the grass and leaning against a pine trunk. "At all events, to-day I feel classic; I want to be classic, I want to forget modern art, I want to walk on the grass in Villa Borghese and smell the bay leaves and pine branches, and Donna Maria's jonquils, and I want to talk about Gluck's music, and to think about that wonderful Orpheus, leaning on the sarcophagus in the attitude of Praxiteles' Faun, and wandering about with the bowed head and languid hands of the Antinous, and making one feel altogether as if the young grasses and budding bushes, the wind piping in the pines and playing double bass in the ilexes, had produced between them all a divine sylvan creature, whose movement is naturally music, whose speech is naturally song."

"Yes," answered Donna Maria, "but I also want to know why we should want to talk about Orpheus in this place and on this day, why the remembrance of that music, the remembrance of that gesture, of the wonderful piece of poetry which Gluck and the Hastreiter have made between them, should affect us in the same way as all these beautiful natural things that make us feel happy and strong. We shouldn't

be thinking of Wagner's *Isolde* in this way under the pine trees, any more than we should be thinking of Sarah Bernhardt's *Fédora*; and I want to know why?"

"You want to know, Donna Maria?" said Baldwin, as they brushed through the laurel and box hedge which enclosed a little dell, dank with arum and cyclamen leaves, where the first birds were singing in the ilexes which surrounded a fountain of deep green water. "You want to know why I should have been reconciled to antique sculpture, converted afresh to the true gods, immediately after hearing *Orpheus*? Why the little Muse with whom I fell in love to-day at the Vatican had certainly been playing on her pipe one of Gluck's melodies?"

"Ah!" sighed Carlo, catching at a laurel twig above him, "Donna Maria is not a modern Italian and a descendant of those terrible practical Romans for nothing. She wants to know why classic music is hygienic."

"Why, yes," she answered; "of course I do. It's most important. If art had not a possible effect upon our spiritual welfare, it would have no more importance and dignity in our lives than any frivolous amusement."

"Oh, the moral value of art!" groaned Carlo.

"Listen," went on Donna Maria, addressing Baldwin; "I can understand some things, but not others. I can understand that beauty is independent of, though occasionally connected with, what we call right and

wrong. I can understand that beauty may be sometimes hostile to our higher feelings."

"I deny it!" cried Carlo enthusiastically.

"Then listen. Have you ever looked at a bullock's heart in a butcher's shop? Well, as a matter of colour, it's one of the loveliest things in the world. The blood spirting out of that decapitated creature's neck on to the marble step, in Regnault's picture, is also exquisitely beautiful. And the most indecent woman may be, as we see in every French exhibition, a beautiful object. But the bullock's heart is nasty; the decapitation is barbarous, the naked woman is indecent; and in so far as we are revolted by objects whose beauty, nevertheless, attracts us. People are so absurd as not to admit that attraction as well as that repulsion; they say that a man who paints bullocks' hearts, decapitations and naked improprieties has a degraded artistic sense, which would mean that all these things are ugly. And the fine result, of course (applied even to crush the dear fauns, because they aren't sufficiently godlike, forsooth), is naturally that other folk say that all things, beastly or not, must be beautiful; nay, that the beastlier, the more beautiful. People are too stupid to see that the truth is simply that in a well organized human being the repulsion for butcher's shops, decapitations, and improprieties ought to be greater than the attraction of any amount of beautiful colour or form; and that a person who overlooks the repulsion and feels only the attraction, although perhaps excellent

as an artist, is rather topsy-turvy as a human being."

"I don't see what that has to do with the hygienic quality of Gluck's music," objected Carlo.

"It has everything to do with it," retorted Donna Maria, resolutely. "As it is with the bullock's heart, so it is with lots of beautiful things; take, for instance, Baudelaire's poems and many of Swinburne's: they are beautiful, but they appeal to things in us which are low, savage, which are bad for our moral health. I return to Wagner's *Tristan*. Yesterday afternoon, at my house, the governess and the music-master played me the whole of that 'Death of Isolde,' arranged for four hands. It is magnificent. As beautiful, quite, as Gluck's 'Elysian Fields,' and much more stirring. But while this is holy, that—I mean Isolde—is unholy. I felt it very strongly, and wondered why. While I was wondering, I suddenly recollected a book of anthropology I have been reading; an awful catalogue of primæval ferocities and madnesses. I understood then. This most modern of all music suggests all the wild beast in mankind. It is a long, horrible, hysterical attack put into music: the furies of speechless sobbing writhing, murderous passion."

"Well; and why not, if, as you say, it is beautiful?" asked Carlo.

"Because," answered Baldwin, as Donna Maria seemed rather at a loss to explain herself; "because whenever art plays with the savage within us, rouses

these primæval passions, it attains perhaps its most potent emotional effects, but it becomes morally detrimental. The later growths of the soul—gentleness, enthusiasm, pitying sorrow—do not afford to art matter, as it were, so magnificently combustible. But it is only when touching such more recent, nobler emotions, or at least in leaving the others untouched, that art has a morally sane effect. Orpheus, in Gluck's music, in the Hastreiter's singing and acting (so measured and harmonious and delicate), is a gentle, tender, chivalrous creature; above all, a civilized human creature. Isolde—and to get the full equivalent, we ought to imagine Isolde acted by a Sarah—a woman in whom the revolt of the ferocious powers of love and despair have quenched all higher emotions, without which the higher animal, man, is not *sane*, because not complete."

"Thank you, Baldwin, you have helped me to explain myself. But now comes the inexplicable. I understand why the Isolde music is, however beautiful, morally debasing. I know that certain combinations of rhythm and harmony lash our nerves in the same way as the passions which they suggest; I understand that music which has the movement, the catch in the breath, the irregular throb of sobbing, should remind us of an hysterical fit. It's quite easy to understand why some music represents what Carlo calls *emotion as it ought not to be*; but why should certain other music represent emotion *as it ought to be*? I see why

a beautiful antique should suggest spiritual health. It suggests bodily health, calmness, moderation: a person like that could not well be morally ill; it is one ideal suggesting another. The statues are healthy, as these trees are healthy, as this wind is healthy, morally quite as much as physically—so far it is easy to understand why we think of them altogether. But music like Gluck's imitates nothing, and therefore ought to suggest nothing. I understand why it does not strike us as unholy; but why should it strike us as holy? And yet that whole performance does: the music of Gluck, and the gestures and expression of the Hastreiter impress me like a religious ceremony, but the ceremony of a religion of innocence and strength and light, not of a religion of mystery, and sin, and weakness."

"I want to know why also," said Carlo, his natural passion for discussion getting the better of his mere whimsical, lazy desire to enjoy and to dream—"not because of the hygienic quality of Orpheus—oh no, I positively abhor the juxtaposition of poetry and carbolic acid—but because I have often puzzled to understand why certain performances make one feel good. Do you remember, Baldwin, a certain Livonian singer—a very different creature from the Hastreiter—whom you heard years ago at our house—a common, coarse creature, but who sang like four-and-twenty angels?"

"Of course, I do, Carlo; and I remember quite well, how, in the intervals of her songs, while she was

playing irrelevantly, you kept whispering to me that it made one understand that the beautiful is the same as the good."

"Yes," went on Carlo. "It made me think of all the good people I knew. My enthusiasms and aspirations seemed to rush to me on the wave of her voice; she seemed to sing to me all that I value most in life, not explicitly naming the things, but giving their essence, the emotions which they bring; and then, when I looked at her, talked with her again, what was she? Prose, prose, threefold prose! I remember feeling quite humiliated afterwards that such a woman, such a thing, as this could, even for a few minutes only, be so much to one, so fill one's nature; I remember feeling a sort of pride and satisfaction when, the day after hearing her, I found that a word of a certain friend of mine, a look in his eyes in talking of his lost mother, had made me feel as happy, as noble as this singing—quite proud to find that a merely moral thing could move me as much as that voice. How is that? It all hangs together," he added, apologetically, "with Donna Maria's curiosity about the moral wholesomeness of Orpheus."

"I think," answered Baldwin after a pause, as they walked over the sere grass and rustling dry leaves beneath the pinkish, sere oaks low down in the park, "I think I could explain my idea best in a metaphor. Imagine, then, that there is in our nature a peal of bells, which are set ringing but rarely, and set ringing by

various ropes. What sets each ringing is any unusual beauty, any unusual goodness, or nobility or tenderness, all, in short, that is desirable and rare : the ideal in some form. These bells may be set in motion by a beautiful sight, for instance, and then, to this sight of a beautiful person, of hills, or sun and water or flowers, there unites the echoes of the previous vibrations of those soul bells ; associations rush upon us of noble sounds and noble feelings, vague, sometimes scarcely to be defined or recognized, but connected with the present experience in their essential power of giving noble delight : we hear the notes of present joy, the echoes, or rather the harmonies, of the joy which has been. The ideal, the desired, the desirable of our less selfish instincts, all unite and redouble the original emotion. Your Livonian singer opens the doors of a paradise in our own soul—a paradise into which she may be as unable to penetrate as the shadows on the grass, the clouds in the sky, the trees and the flowers, the lines and tints of the hills, are unable to perceive the deeds and words of heroism or tenderness which somehow evoke them in our thoughts ; as the flowers which we lay on the bier of the beloved, the incense we burn on an altar, are unable to love or to worship. We are so made that nobility drags out nobility, and beauty, beauty. We feel good in the presence of great bodily perfection. Beauty, it seems to me, is not merely, as Rossetti has it somewhere, genius ; beauty is goodness. We are the nobler for the

delusion, nay, rather, the great reality of association, which we feel."

"Then," asked Donna Maria, eagerly; "music which does not arouse in us the thought or feeling of violent or enervating passion—music which is merely beautiful—becomes in so far not merely passive as regards our spiritual welfare, but absolutely actively favourable to it?"

"Undoubtedly, it seems to me," answered Baldwin; "and that is why such music as Gluck's does certainly suggest *emotion as it should be*, even as antique sculpture shows us arms and legs as they should be."

They had come to those high lying pastures under the pine trees. The grey sky was in a tumult, the south-west wind was making big music in the branches, in the hollow trunks of the ilexes, bending the slender, clustering bay trees, shaking the pine tops; and yet, one knew and felt, gently helping the anemones to unfold in the grass. To our three friends, with the previous evenings in their ears still, and the coming evening in their ears already, it all made the music of *Orpheus*; even as that music of *Orpheus* had seemed to fill the theatre with the scent of laurel and mountain pine and jonquil: creaking of branch, moaning of hollow trunk, rustle of leaves, delicate music of violins and hautboys, fresh full notes of a young voice, new like the young grass under foot, it all moved and melted in their thoughts, as the grey cloud-wreaths moved and melted in the wind and the sunshine.

"Look!" cried Donna Maria, suddenly darting forward, "here is something for Orpheus!" and she began breaking long, berried twigs from off a great laurel branch, which the wind had snapped and thrown on the grass.

"Oh!" added Carlo enthusiastically, "but that's not all. Look there! the pine branches."

Some foresters were lopping the branches in a little pine wood; the green spruce branches lay in heaps under the trees, ready to cart. "May I take some?" cried Carlo to the astonished woodmen. And he filled his arms with the fresh, supple, resinous green.

"Now," he said, suddenly taking the bay twigs out of the lady's hands, "your jonquils, Donna Maria. Wouldn't that represent Gluck's music, doesn't it symbolize that beautiful Orpheus, with his wayward, half serious, half childish smiles of a young faun?"

"Yes," answered Donna Maria absently, and turning quickly to Baldwin. "Then it is true that there is an art which shows us ourselves as we are, and another which shows us ourselves as we should be? It is true, then, that it is better for us to care for the art which does not merely express ourselves, but suggests something better? Then I am right that there is classic art, and that classic art is wholesome art—that there is a moral value in some sorts of beauty?"

"Certainly," answered Baldwin, smiling at her eager determination, while his eyes followed Carlo scouring the grass for more fallen bay branches.

"Then," went on Donna Maria, "I was right in thinking it so sad that you should care no longer for Gluck's music—I was right in being delighted that you should have liked the dear statues in the Vatican once more?"

"Quite right, dear Donna Maria; and what is more, it is the music which has made me able once more to love the statues—it's the poetry of those divine melodies, of that exquisite expression and gesture, which has made me feel once more the poetry of that silent, motionless people of marble. And I will confess one thing to you: I told you I had fallen in love with a little antique Muse, seated on a stone, quite young and childish, with the flute just removed from her lips, thinking over the tune she has just been playing, and wondering why it was so sad and so consoling. She had thought of it as a melody just like any other, neither gay nor melancholy; and instead, it has set her thinking of those other fields and meadows below, full of flowers and sunlight, but where the dead walk divided from the living whom they love, until love is stronger than death and they are again united—and the tune which my little Muse has been playing, playing to herself through the centuries, and to me all day, is that haut-boy solo in the third act of *Orpheus*."

They had come up to the carriage, which was waiting at a bend of the road, near a little temple of Apollo, screened among laurels, and reduced, in two centuries, from an imitation ruin to a real one.

"Well," asked Carlo, about to place his armful of green in the hood. "Well?"

"Well," answered Donna Maria, a sudden brightness in her eyes; "we will send it all this evening as an offering to Orpheus,"

And taking the mass of pine branches and laurel twigs, she removed the bunch of jonquils from her breast and laid it gently upon them.

III

They were in the theatre once more, Donna Maria, Baldwin and young Carlo.

The silence had been broken by the violin prelude of the third act, at the movement marked in the score "Lento Dolce," and which seems, in its even flow, to carry the soul, upon some reedy, willowy stream, into the heart of the land of the happy dead. The happy dead, the heroes and heroines whom *Æneas* saw in Hades, were but sorrily represented by a ballet of green and pink gauze, crowning and recrowning each other with paper garlands, and watching the twisting and shaking of a more distinguished Elysian skirt. But the music of Gluck blotted out this vision of doubtful bliss. After those bars of introduction, of voyage, as it were, to the land of shades, there arose the reedy voice of a hautboy, quavering in unearthly heights over the tremulous violins. All other instruments are instruments; but the hautboy, with its

soft shrillness, its quivering breath, or at least this particular hautboy of Gluck's, is like the ghost of a human voice : a human voice which has shuffled its mortal coil, leaving it far below in a denser atmosphere, and soared into a stratum of sound where it trembles in isolation, panting and palpitating like the waves of heat in the summer air. The hautboy rose above the violins, meandering in long intricate cadences, turning back upon itself in clustered little notes like minute wing-beats, throwing itself out again in gradually swelled notes, folding up in gradual silence, only to start off afresh in new labyrinths of melody, or to fly rapidly up and down giddy little scales : a long instrumental solo, accompanied by the orchestra, which seems simple when we examine it, but which (the highest effort, perhaps, of Gluck's genius) carries with it a sense of infinite remoteness, of the peaceful but vast glades inaccessible to living feet. So strong was this impression, that when the chorus came forward, headed by Eurydice, and sang that this was the sacred land of eternal repose, one was ready to believe it, and to feel, when the orchestra began to prelude the coming of Orpheus, and to twitter and murmur and ripple and rustle with the birds and waters and leaves of Elysium, that the demi-god had really penetrated into fairy land. Orpheus came forward, the laurel crown on his head, the lyre by his side, a quaint, triumphal creature, radiant with the new sunshine of Elysium and its immortal air, radiant with the hope of Eurydice. And

when the cardboard clouds had rolled away, and he stepped into the midst of the happy shades, he was met by a solemn song of welcome, wide, solemn and sweet. But among the ethereal music, its serenity suffused with sadness, Orpheus stood out as a strange and foreign thing, a living creature among the shades, with restless limbs and impatient, passionate young face, waiting with tremor for the restored Eurydice.

Then, when the chorus was hushed, and its last orchestral echoes had died away, he began to look round, but with eyes that dared not see (for such was the promise given to the gods, that he should not look upon Eurydice till safe upon our earth), and slowly to move, to wave to and fro, to a music which seemed to result from his movements rather than to control them. Silent, without a word or a note, he turned to one group of shades, then to another, averting his eyes, extending his hands, imploring Eurydice to come forth, imploring that they should make him sicken no longer with hope and suspense. Then quickly he made his way into the crowd, turning aside with outstretched arms, like so much woodland leafage, the creatures that he met; striking deeper into the crowd with trembling hands and anxious, averted eyes, silently moving to that twisting, winding music, till it was plain that Eurydice was not there; and he returned, with imploring face and wearied gesture, to wait impatiently once more. Suddenly a light came into his eyes, a curious smile,

childish, eager, on to his lips ; he raised one hand as if to catch some unheard sound, and then, quickly, softly, like one following some sudden magnetism, glided into another group, rapidly shoving aside the women as he went, till he stopped suddenly behind one woman, hesitating, drawing in his breath, his hopes and fears on tip-toe. With that old smile, childish, half crazy, he laid his hand on her shoulder, the light of joy flooding his thin, irregular face, and taking her by the hand, led her, his heart visibly panting with the sighing panting music, out of the crowd. The music moved in wide waves, oscillated in little sharp detached notes ; and Orpheus's hand, raised behind the girl's head, hesitated and trembled in suspense. Then, with infinite joyful gentleness, it descended, slowly, slowly, over her face, feeling for the well-known features. But at the second touch the joy in his face died out, smouldering gradually into doubt and disappointment. Holding her still by the hand, he let that other exploring hand droop in disenchantment, his face convulsed with uncertainty and fear. The music swayed, as if nodding yes and no ; again, as it moved in delicate, hesitating, detached notes, the hand of Orpheus descended across the girl's face, but languidly this time, timidly, and with a little shudder. The music rose to a closing cadence, the hand was withdrawn, Orpheus fell a step back, his face faint with disgust ; the hand holding the girl's grasped it yet a second in horror and indecision, it brought her nearer him for a heart's beat, then, as the

music ended the cadence, it pushed her away, and threw her hand from him in loathing.

“O happy dwellers in Elysium,” burst out the passionate recitative of Orpheus; “keep me no longer in suspense; give back Eurydice to me.”

“The Fates accede to thy wishes,” answered the chorus in a great, massive phrase; and that song of welcome began once more, but calling upon Eurydice, bidding her rejoin her living lover; and turned, this time, into the solemn farewell of the land of Death. Orpheus stood there silent, with bowed head, clasping his hands, grinding them in suppressed impatience; and, as the chorus drew to an end, there came up to him, suddenly from behind, and rapidly placing her hands on his shoulders the long-sought Eurydice. At that well-known touch, her lover gave a start, but not of joy: his slender figure shrank in her clasp, his face paled and shuddered, overcome by the greatness of happiness, by the sense of supernatural things.

Then, after a second, his white, convulsed face was flooded with joy, his arms were flung round Eurydice’s neck, and passing his hand lightly over her face as he went—to feel, if not to see it, at least—he led her away, silently, swiftly; borne off with her, as it were, on the last notes of that sweet, solemn song of farewell from the dead.

The last bars of that chorus were echoed by the violins; the stage was empty, the curtain falling. But no one spoke. More poignant than any grief

was this great, dearly-bought joy—silencing, overpowering.

“I wonder,” said Baldwin, after a long while, “whether they have carried her your pine and laurel branches, Donna Maria?”

“I know they have,” answered Carlo. “I spoke to your servant just before the last act; he had given them, and swore he had been silent.”

“Do you think she will appreciate such an offering, unconsecrated by a florist?” asked Baldwin, sceptically. “Will she understand what it means?”

“What does it matter whether she does?” exclaimed Carlo, cynically. “Most probably she won’t; but we shall never be the wiser; and when one will never be any the wiser oneself, and one has a silent footman to screen one from others, why shouldn’t one have the satisfaction of indulging in a bit of sentiment? Those branches were not intended to please *her*, bless you! They were intended to please ourselves, to put the finishing touch to our impression.”

Donna Maria was rather overcome with the sense of having made an idiot of herself, more especially as she could see the tip of several huge pads, baskets, bolsters of complimentary flowers protruding from the side scenes, ready for presentation. To have sent an armful of pine branches to an actress, and she a woman of the world! But at Carlo’s explanation she flared up.

“No, no!” she exclaimed; “that’s disgusting of

you ! I'm willing she should throw it all on her fire, but I *won't* presume to be cynical."

A breath of south-west wind among the pine trees, a scent of bay leaves and shaken spruce, of growing grass and opening flowers, swept across Carlo's mind.

"And yet," he said, "we have all seen instances of artists, not merely singers and actors, but painters and writers, being apparently totally impervious, foreign to the sort of impression which their work produces ; living unconscious of the kind of images and emotions which their art awakens in others ; in fact, being the particular human creatures among a thousand whom we should put aside as unworthy of listening to their own music, of seeing their own pictures and acting, even of reading their own poetry.

"But how," persisted Donna Maria, her mobile face pathetically showing her vision of those branches crackling in the singing-woman's grate ; "how can a creature give us what she has not got herself ? Or do you suppose it possible that she gives but a fortuitous combination—ordered by some automatic mechanism of her nature—of tones and gestures which, like the fortuitous combination of lights and shades and colours in trees and meadows, makes shape, has character, and suggestiveness only when perceived by our mind, but existing to her as so much dead matter ? It's absurd ! absurd ! Explain it if you can !"

"I see," answered Carlo, laughing ; "you are determined that she should understand the connection

between Orpheus and the Villa Borghese. But listen. Can we not suppose—and daily experience obliges us to form some explanatory supposition, does it not?—that in certain beings, endowed with special powers of evoking poetry for others, there exists, as it were, an interruption, a separation, between this artistic entity and their entity as men and women; and that what circulates into the whole life of the beholder and listener, mingling with their hourly feelings and perceptions and fancies, remains isolated in these special creatures, dammed up, like water in a reservoir, in a special corner of their nature? ”

“ Ah,” put in Baldwin, “ you will never persuade Donna Maria of that; you will never persuade your own feelings, however much you may persuade your reason. We suffer from, or rather we enjoy, a special delusion, a sort of intellectual mirage, in virtue of which half the charm in all things which are charming lies in the suggestion that there must be more charmings beyond. The delusion is due, I suppose, to the seeming logical connection between a visible and an invisible, a given and a giver; the joy we have received makes us look to a joy which we shall receive. The poetic faculty within us is exactly this power of creating for ourselves a something beyond; of making for ourselves an unreality out of every reality. Half the charm of the music of Gluck is that it suggests to us those meadows in the Villa Borghese; half their charm will always be in future that they suggest to us the music

of Gluck. Half the charm of Orpheus is that Orpheus must be so much more charming : that could we only know this youth, redolent to us of pastures and woodland, full of a life so keen and tender, we should reach (as we think) a thing to whom woods, meadows, life, and love must mean much more than to ourselves ; one who could tell so many things, enrich our nature by so much."

"And then you are quite pleased at the possibility of all this being nonsense!" cried Donna Maria; "of our finding a creature who has less of all this than ourselves; knowing less, feeling less. You find it quite satisfactory; forsooth!"

"Not satisfactory, but in a sense consolatory," answered Baldwin. "It shows us, indeed, for the hundredth time, that in this world all is isolated, dispersed, imperfect; but it shows also the power, the irresistible impulse we possess of uniting, concentrating, and perfecting by our vision, our perception, our feeling. Great as is the art of the artist, the art is more potent still of him who perceives, who connects the single work, the single art, with life, intermeshing it with all life's nerves and arteries. And therefore I should not repine too much were Orpheus to throw pine branches and laurel twigs upon the fire, unconscious of the poetry which he had evoked. Wander over thy wooden stage among thy cardboard trees, my poor Orpheus, move thy beautiful arms and open out thy passionate eyes, sing thy woodland, meadowland songs! We know

thee when we meet thee again, thee or thy brethren, as we know when we come across the laurels and cypresses of Pindus. We know thee, Orpheus, and recognize thy face. But behold ! when we look in it, 'tis the face of one who has neither gesture nor voice ; it is the face of one of our own dear friends." And Baldwin lightly pressed Donna Maria's little childish fingers, lying disconsolately on the elbow of her chair.

The last act was drawing to a close. Eurydice had implored and stormed, Orpheus had kept his word to the gods, neither looked not explained, until at length his courage had failed. He had looked, but only to see Eurydice sink dead a second time. When the dreadful reality had become clear, or half clear, he had gently lifted her from the ground and wrapped her in his cloak. And now, after calling on her vainly, in supplication, in agony, and finally almost in anger, he sank down, as the violins played the last bars of the famous air "*Che farò senza Euridice*," on the seat beside her, clasping her dead hands in his hands, and hiding his head on his dead love's breast.

"Well," said Carlo, as they were moving away, and in order, after that silence, to say something, "what is, after all our discussions, the moral value of the beautiful ?"

"To make us believe that there is good in ourselves and others," answered Donna Maria.

"And that great artists are not necessarily automata," added Baldwin, apologetically.

For, in that last pathetic scene, when Orpheus had taken off his cloak to spread over Eurydice, there had been revealed, twisted into the girdle of his tunic, a long twig of laurel, of the sort which grows not in theatre dressing-rooms, but in the high-lying pastures of the Villa Borghese.

ON FRIENDSHIP

ON FRIENDSHIP

I

“YOU are unfair—you, who teach the rest of us that justice is most often charity, dear Signora Elena,” remonstrated Baldwin. “For it is unfair to judge the present condition of any one, and particularly of your humble servant, by his opinion of several years ago. Now, it must be three, five, even seven years ago since Carlo wrote down our talks *de omnibus rebus et quibusdam aliis*.”

“But I complain of the contrary,” answered his hostess, smiling with her indulgent, half-amused mouth, while scrutinizing him with her earnest eyes: “I complain that you have not changed enough, or changed rather in the wrong direction. I noticed, in reading our dear Carlo’s notes of your discussions, that you tended to—I don’t know what to call it exactly—a sort of optimistic pessimism, or rather an ascetic epicureanism. And now you seem more than ever a kind of double-headed Janus—you know the things in the Roman gardens—with one mouth declaring that we must strive to realize happiness for others, and the other mouth declaring that only in the unreal can we be happy. We are to improve reality with all our

might; and yet we are to find peace only in art, in poetry, in human beings treated as unrealities. Now what use would there be in improving reality, if only the unreal can give any satisfaction? If, on the other hand, beauty is not life, but something outside it and incapable of affecting it, what right have you, who preach the amelioration of life, to waste your time in its enjoyment?"

They were seated outside a house on the Bay of Spezia, in a little grove of ilexes, with here and there a big tuft of white heather, or a bush of delicately extended lentiscus. Between the trees, between the boles, slender and dark, and the clusters of pointed dark leaves, the sea was heaving in delicate luminous grey-ness—mysterious, unearthly, as it never appears save through branches, pale and austere.

"You are mistaken," rejoined Baldwin, wondering at the same time whether there might not be some truth still hidden to him in the lady's words; "and had Carlo written down a talk we had together some two years back, when we went to hear Gluck's *Orpheus* in Rome, you would not accuse me of separating art and life, the wholesomeness of the one from that of the other. And see, by a fortunate coincidence, I have this very morning taken what I always call in my mind a moral walk."

"A moral walk?"

"Yes; don't laugh. Perhaps we all know the impression, or perhaps indeed you, who seem to carry

On Friendship

God about wherever you go, don't know what it is to meet Him on the high road. I sometimes do—rarely ; and I always remember these walks as events in my life. I had one once in your Apennines, five or six years ago ; and one also along the Tweed near Kelso. To-day it was in that torrent-bed to the back of your house : there were three sweetbriar bushes, covered with white roses, among the round black stones, and the birds were singing like mad in the acacias. It seems there sometimes happens some conjunction of oneself and things outside oneself, which causes certain moments, although they are loafing moments of mere desultory thought and impression, to be, in the highest sense, *lived by us*. The world presents only its beautiful side ; everything is satisfactory, everything harmonious ; the little worries of life disappear, and its meaner problems. The goodness of visible things, the obliteration, perhaps, also of mankind out of nature—mankind with its contradictions and imperfections, its train of suspicions—all render us able to hope in ourselves, to feel the preponderance of the Better, its almost inevitable triumph, in such a way that we can recognize our worst faults with humility indeed, but neither self-abasement nor rebellion. Moments these, in which we spiritually live and spiritually grow, the rest of life being but the application of what has been learned mainly in them.”

“ Well, and what did you learn this morning in the torrent-bed by the three briar bushes ? ” asked she.

"Oh, nothing new to you, dear Signora Elena," answered Baldwin, smiling; "the mere old story over again."

"Which old story, Baldwin? I fear the very one which seems to me so false and contradictory—that life and happiness are separate things, that the reality and the ideal are never to be reconciled?"

"Not at all; I cannot understand why you should tax me with that. You know, on the contrary, that art, for instance, is in my eyes legitimate and noble only when it makes us sounder for the struggle of life. And I tell you about my moral walks exactly because they show how great a moral aid all true beauty must be to us. But here comes one who really is that strange mixture of stoic and epicurean which you accuse me of being. Does she not look like Philosophy in person, descended from some fresco, as she comes along your Botticelli grove?"

As Althea advanced, all dressed in white, her tall and stately figure framed between the black ilex arches, with the shimmer of grey sea here and there, she seemed indeed to prove her own assertion, that this walk was really in a strange land underground, where the ghosts of poets wandered, with laurel wreaths on their heads.

"Well," she asked, sitting down on the marble bench, and taking one of her invalid friend's thin hands with shy tenderness, "what did they say among the ilexes overhanging the sea?"

"They were saying," answered Baldwin, "that your

poor friend is a double-headed Janus, with one face for pessimism and one for optimism ; and he was trying to divert the criticism by remarking that Lady Althea is half an epicurean and half a stoic."

"Whereupon she answered that it was time for dear Signora Elena to take her afternoon walk," and Althea very deliberately slipped her friend's arm through one of her own, and having handed Baldwin some shawls, took up a cushion in her free hand.

"The mistake which I seem to see in Baldwin," went on Signora Elena, as they slowly ascended a little valley, where the slender budding poplars powdered with palest, most exquisite gold the ghostly greenish grey of the olive trees, "exists I think also, but in a somewhat different way, in Lady Althea ; so you must let me quarrel with it to my heart's content. You say, Baldwin, that you by no means divorce the serious work of life from your ideal pleasures. It is true so far as art and beautiful nature are concerned ; you admit them as ennobling factors in reality. But—if I may judge by the notes which Carlo took down of your talks, and also by things I have heard you say—you seem to treat human beings, and the feelings with which they may inspire you—the human beings you actually know—as something much more remote from life and its duties, as a much more than artistic material for unreal pleasures——"

"But," interrupted Althea, assuming that look, as Baldwin called it, of one of the youths in Plato's

Dialogues, "surely no one can insist more earnestly than Mr Baldwin upon the duty of sharing our thoughts with others, even of attempting to influence them to the utmost. Why, but for him, I might still think the world a box of jerking puppets."

"Yes, he admits the importance of other people in so far as their opinions and their action upon others, not himself, are concerned. But, in their relation to himself, he tends to seek in other creatures merely certain æsthetic pleasures; pleasures apparently unconsciously unreal to himself: watching them when they are picturesque, or when, by putting out the candles or half shutting his eyes, he can make them seem picturesque; instead of trying to understand and be understood by them, instead, in very simple words, of allowing himself to love them."

Baldwin felt, as those keen, kind eyes sought his, and as he looked into the face, worn with bodily pain and the troubles of others, but enriched thereby, as some beautiful marble is enriched in tone by exposure to rain and wind, that, in this case, he had certainly yielded to very real affection. Yet he knew that his friend had divined the truth, and he admitted it.

"Yes," he answered, "but surely that is inevitable as one grows out of youth, unless heaven have endowed one to love all creatures merely because they are alive and may therefore suffer. Nay, do not interrupt me, Signora Elena; though, after all, how can *you* understand such matters? God has made you, like St.

Francis, His Simpleton. There are things incomprehensible to you, though clear as daylight. Still, I will try to explain myself. As years pass, the habit of dealing fairly with oneself may lead, does lead, to dealing unfairly with others; the recognition of one's own baseness to the disbelief in their nobility. I am not alluding to a facility of crediting others with one's own shabby thoughts and deeds; personally, I think I have rather a difficulty in realizing that others can be half as poor creatures as myself. I am speaking of something different from that and more subtle; the recognition of all that is hollow, delusive, or inexplicable in ourselves; a recognition which comes to most, at least many, of us after our first youth, making us gradually suspect our neighbours of being as self-deluded, as unreal as ourselves. Experience tells us that the motives we assign for our actions, even to ourselves, are not the real ones, the explanations of our preferences not the principal; that we are for ever treating as primary and all-important merely quite secondary and accidental causes and reasons, deluding not merely others, but ourselves. Add to this the recognition that so much in ourselves which passes muster as spontaneous is mere conventional habit; so much which we call moral, merely physical: the crude cravings or complaints of the body masqueraded as elations and depressions of the soul. My neighbour thinks he is making an effort; but I know that I often think I am making an effort, when in reality I am merely slipping,

slipping, or cheerfully stepping out. Thus truthfulness begets suspicion ; and very often, doubtless, injustice to others is born of justice to oneself. And the more other people seek to explain themselves, the clearer grows the cynical consciousness of one's explanations of oneself ; and one becomes unable to enjoy the commerce of others, because one dislikes the contract with oneself. Therefore, it is surely better to consider human kind rather as a field for one's duty than as a source of one's pleasures."

They walked along for a moment in silence between the banks of ferns trickling with clear water, and under the sweeping, feathery olive branches, between long rows of dry reeds, supporting the twisted vines just bursting into pinkish bud, and great fig trees writhing their grey arms, and stretching out their little gloves of green.

"I can't quite understand you, Baldwin," said Signora Elena, after a pause. "Perhaps because I am less rigid with myself than you are."

"Thank heaven, you are less suspicious of others," interrupted Althea, whom Baldwin's confession had puzzled and displeased. "Surely the only thing experience of oneself should teach is that, until further proof, it is kinder and more practical to suppose other folk to be honest. But I forgot, Mr Baldwin is in doubt about his own honesty."

Signora Elena smiled at the young woman's downrightness ; morally, as physically, she seemed never

to have found a load too heavy for her muscles, and she could not conceive any gulf, any division, between the intellectual perception of a duty and the moral readiness to perform it.

“When I was young, and imagined myself more religious than nowadays,” said the elder lady, “I used to be distressed by the thought that I was decidedly less good than other folk, subject to more temptations, gifted with less generous impulses, incapable of as much justice. Then this fear, gradually dying out, was succeeded by another one, even less amiable. I became distressed at the possibility of being good. It sounds very absurd; but it really was very distressing, my dear Althea. For, I said to myself, if it were out of the common to be like me, to have this small amount of moral power, what must not be the average and below it? Later I ceased to trouble about my comparative goodness or badness, and troubled only about my positive. And now I find that instinctively I assume that others are as good as myself. I have no doubt some are worse and some better; but, taken as a mass, I try and give them as much quarter as myself, though very unwilling to admit its necessity; and as a mass, also, I do not believe the evil things of them which I admit of myself. Thus others, the unknown, are always my hope; they seem destined to do easily what I can do only with effort, or not at all. And I think that this kind of humility, if it be humility, is the source of all my happiness and hopefulness. I

seem to feel the world around me, on an average or in the future, decidedly better than myself."

Passing between the high black houses, with their vague air of dilapidated castles, the three friends reached a big olive grove, and sat down on a broken wall, after picking their way carefully among the fallen black fruit which strewed the grass. A rout of village children followed, and began, half boldly, half shyly, with much tittering and running away, to heap Signora Elena's lap with anemones, marigolds, and coarse blue archangels, because, passing through the village, they had seen her make a wreath for a tiny boy, pink and blue-eyed, in faded blue clothes, and faded rose-coloured skull-cap; and now each of them wanted a garland like his.

"Well," said Baldwin, watching the two ladies making daisy chains, "but all that you have said Signora Elena—what you were saying just now—does not prove that I am not quite right in enjoying my fellow-creatures, when there is anything enjoyable about them, from a distance, and without any contact. We get the benefit of all the best qualities of the people who have any good qualities. Before discovering this fact, I used in my youth to wonder why I did not want the affection of others; how I could listen to this person or that talking of their friends, dead and alive, how I could hang on their words, and yet never ask for any of the affection they were bestowing on others. It struck me suddenly one day, as I was listening to

a certain friend of ours, whom you know, that I possessed as much of this creature as I could use or wish—as much, probably, as was worth having. The very love for her dead sister, which charmed me about her, was, in the very best sense of the word, mine. I could carry it about in my life, make it vibrate in my feelings, sing like a melody through my mind. I possessed it all, all her better self, her poetry, as I possess the winter morning with its blue mists and crisp sunshine, the June night with its throbbing stars. I possessed this soul more completely than it possessed itself. What should I want with its affection? That was better reserved for those who could not have the soul itself.”

Signora Elena merely smiled and shook her head, as she looked up from her lapful of flowers. The children screamed and laughed from behind a bank where they hid, a little heap of brilliant colours; the birds twittered among the branches; and, across the ravine, hidden in the greyiness of olives, came the sound of an accordion, and a plaintive soldier's song. Hard by, where a little stream trickled from a natural basin among the stones and brambles, stood a solitary cypress. Baldwin took one of the daisy chains which his friend had made, and fastened it round the trunk of the tree—an offering, he said, to Pales or Pan.

“In fact,” said Signora Elena, “you would, my dear Baldwin, divide your life into two parts—one for duty, one for enjoyment. And as your ideas of enjoyment are purely æsthetic, you would place love—I

mean love as it exists between friends—on the æsthetic side, and limit it strictly to dreams, and to that kind of half-conscious make-believe which is at the bottom of all art. In fact, you would allow yourself the satisfaction, as you express it, of possessing all which seemed beautiful in the soul of another without running the risk of disturbing your ideal contemplation by contact with reality. Affection, love, are to you like your god Pan, something you don't believe in (and would think it wrong to believe in, perhaps), but which, safe in your disbelief, you enjoy hanging round with your garlands."

"Well," admitted Baldwin, "that does seem to be the summing up of all my remarks on the subject, so I suppose it is what I think."

"And yet," answered Signora Elena, very gently, "I venture to doubt whether it is."

Althea had been listening silently, with that quiet eagerness which had struck Baldwin years ago, but ripened now into a curious expression of power, the power of absolute ingenuousness, of complete openness of mind.

"But," she said, "is not Mr Baldwin more in the right than his words make him out? Is not love, in the ordinary, the best sense of the word, perhaps merely the highest of our æsthetic efforts; so high, and considering the selfishness of mankind, so great, that we are tempted to give it a moral value? I don't understand anything about human beings, you know," she went on, plucking at one of the olive branches, which hung,

lightly poised in the air, over the rough paved path ;
“ but I seem sometimes to feel around me a vague,
universal human blunder ; to guess, very confusedly,
at the existence of one of those great frauds practised
every now and then upon ourselves——”

“ And which set human accounts, how wrong and
for how long ! ” put in Baldwin.

“ I mean,” went on Althea, “ the blunder of con-
sidering as religious certain acts pleasant to ourselves ;
certain luxuries of our soul as moral efforts ; the enjoy-
ment of the more refined pleasures of this world as a
meritorious and sanctifying occupation. God, accord-
ing to this review, is in all the beautiful things of this
world, and to contemplate them is therefore to con-
template Him also ; granted ; but He is equally in
all the evil things also and equally to be contemplated
in them, if by God we mean merely the creative force.
If, on the other hand, by *God* we mean Matthew Arnold’s
‘ Force that makes for righteousness,’ beauty is no
more a condition or a quality thereof than is redness
or yellowness, or warmth or coldness. These beautiful
things are *good* only in the sense that they are pleasant
to us, tending rather to our comfort than discomfort
in the long run ; and in the sense also that they are
perhaps less connected with the evil possibilities of
our nature than other things equally pleasant, but
which we are not in such a hurry to call good.”

“ But,” answered Signora Elena, astonished and
pathetically touched, as she always was, at the odd

impersonal stoicism of this beautiful creature, a stoicism at once so young and telling of so much painful observation, "you seem, like Baldwin, to take for granted that love is one of these purely æsthetic activities of the soul, that the love of human creatures is the same sort of thing as the love of trees, skies, beautiful pictures, or music. But it is surely different. You remember St. Catherine of Siena praying that she might be able to love even the dullest people, even the most repulsive because, in the light of that love, she would see what was hidden without that light, the *sweet reasonable soul* of which most of us contain a particle."

"It is difficult to talk of love, and know what one is talking about," interrupted Baldwin, "and poverty of words produces confusion of thought. We apply to Yseult that unlucky sentence made for Magdalen—'because she loved much'—and pardon the one because we pardon the other, forgetting that Yseult loved Tristram and Magdalen loved Christ."

The sun had not yet sunk, but beneath the olives a sort of twilight had already set in. The grass, no longer to be distinguished as such, was turning into a mere bodiless greenness beneath the hanging grey boughs; a green atmosphere in which the white garlic flowers seemed no longer to grow like ordinary flowers in ordinary grass, but to float, white specks of foam, as in water; while the olive trees seemed to merge into a roof of mist above that strange green brightness;

a roof broken here or there by a glimpse of the real, pale yellow sky outside.

"Yes," answered Althea, slowly, her eyes fixed on a twig, almost a garland, of olive, printing itself, like an exquisite silver-point drawing, on one of these rifts of almost colourless sky, her thoughts far away from the scene, "I know that religious people mean by *love* something totally different from the feeling—not of Yseult, she has nothing to do here, but even of Magdalen. I was looking over a little ascetic book of the fourteenth century, by Passavanti, the other day. I suppose he merely repeated what all other ascetics have said ever since the beginning; but, you know, I have read very few books, so things come new to me; and I was struck by the old man's definition of love as the love of God, which love of God makes us love men. I suppose that would mean, in our language, that the desire for good makes us thoughtful for our fellows, and sympathizing with them, whom, without the desire for good, or, as they call it, love of God, we should never perhaps have approached. That's what you mean, Signora Elena, and what your St. Catherine meant."

"No," said Signora Elena; "but go on all the same; I want to hear your ideas."

"Well, then, is this love? Is it the same that people feel for their nearest and dearest?—not of Yseults and Tristrams; but the love of devoted wives, mothers, and daughters, of fabulous friends—this mere universal

desire to understand, to help for the love of God or of good ; this which can have no preferences, since the love of the happiness of others is a matter in which our enjoyment cannot prefer this or that ? Surely the two things are not the same ? It seems to me," she went on, her eyes, her voice wandering, as it were, far off, as if she were speaking of things purely abstract, " so far as I have been able to make out, that love—well, call it merely strong affection—is simply a passionate preference for an individual, for that creature's society, ideas, affection, and interests ; a vastly disproportionate importance in life and happiness given to one individual, or a certain number of individuals, over all the rest of mankind, however much we may desire to do right by all that rest. And how does the feeling stand towards the other one, the supposed love of God, except as a thing separate, different, if not as a rival ? Should the two clash, one tend to take up more room and crowd out the other, what must happen ? The supreme love of the creature, or the supreme love of right, must one of them give way, even as, in their struggles, any other of our natural tastes, as the love of ease or the love of beauty ? I don't wish to run down human affection ; I am only saying that it seems to me a totally different thing from what people call the love of God—surely the one is not a drop from the sea of the other ? Preference, fondness for what one enjoys, which is the love of human beings, cannot be a fragment of the love of doing right. I cannot under-

stand why we should not call the latter by its true, stern name : briefly, Duty."

They walked on for a long while in silence. The sun had set behind the big hill, with the great forge chimneys smoking like Baal altars into the grey clouds. The moon, wan and yellow, had appeared among the watery clouds ; an emanation, it seemed, of those diaphanous olive groves, pale, vague, half luminous, whose solitary reign had begun, turning human beings into shy intruders in their breathless whispering grey silence.

It seemed as if, should one speak, it would be speaking to oneself alone. At least, it seemed so to Baldwin.

" I don't think," he said, suddenly, " that my quarrel with human affection—since I am supposed to have a quarrel—comes from the sense of the love of man and the love of God not being the same. I fear I don't rise to Lady Althea's height of serene contemplation. I fear that I find love a delusion in a way which touches me more closely. I am getting to believe more and more, with every day which comes and goes, that, despite all friendships and all loves, we must rest content to live alone with our own soul. Our thoughts, our aspirations, our only valuable confessions and penances, come to us only and alone ; our veritable intellectual and moral life, like our veritable physical life, takes place in isolation. Sympathy may help, love may help ; but what we actually feel and think and do, we feel and think and do alone. There is a point beyond

which no soul can come within sight of ours—an inner sanctuary where we are alone with ourselves. The destruction of such a boundary would be the destruction of oneself ; you might as well bleed yourself into your friend's veins : you and he would die, and your lives would have been none the less separate in those last moments. There is something solemn and sad in this knowledge ; and, next to the fact of death, there is none so full of awe, I think, as that of such inevitable isolation ; next to the knowledge that time will be when we must be separate for ever, comes the knowledge that, in reality, we can never be fully united. And, like the other, this fact also being repulsive to our feelings is difficult of grasp to our minds. There are some who never do grasp it ; and all of us know how long a time elapses before we do so. You shake your head, dear Signora Elena, but can you deny the truth of my words ? There are in the life of every great affection moments of intense unrest and pain, when we feel that we cannot any longer share our life ; that we must, morally speaking, rush out into solitude or shut ourselves up all alone ; moments of cold misery, when we seem at once abandoned by our friend, and abandoning ; when we feel alone, terribly alone, the whole earth's breadth between us and him, the whole earth's surface depopulate—moments from which we return with spasmodic pain and relief, humbled, puzzled, feeling as if we had been betraying and been betrayed. Where have we been ? and why have we not thought of carrying with us the

beloved one? Nay, rather, why has an imperious instinct taught us to slink away in silence; moments of humiliation and pain, whence we issue into a spasm of community of existence, burying ourself in the other's soul, trying to absorb its warmth, to feel its pulses, hiding our eyes therein. Moments these of the dispelling of a great delusion, a delusion which some insist upon carrying down to their graves, bruising themselves against the impregnable identity of another; or roving off, moral libertines, in hopes of finding elsewhere—what? Final fulfilment of that dream of absolute union? No; but once more that passing semblance thereof, through which, as the central moment of all great love, we have all of us lived."

They had entered the fishing village on the strand, where the workmen from the great arsenal across the bay were hurrying home from the steamer, like black ants, into the twilit streets. Everything had become utterly unsubstantial in the gloaming: houses mere pale, pink or yellowish-grey surfaces, people faint things, with outline dying away into the dark, creatures without solidity, which one might expect to walk through, moving freely in space. And with this dimness had come that strange appearance of aimlessness, of disconnection with all real concerns, of a crowd moving in the dusk.

"One feels that one will never know them," said Althea, when they had descended from amid the silent vagueness of trees and stones into this vociferous

vagueness of dimly moving human beings, "and we should be frightfully startled if we suddenly heard, from among these spectres, a voice we know addressing us."

"It is Baldwin's idea of human intercourse," said Signora Elena, sadly.

"Of course," he went on, almost to himself, "the return to one's own solitude is bitter, and bitterer, perhaps, for the knowledge of its being inevitable. Sometimes it is a perfect agony; the throes of the asphyxiated or drowned man returning unwillingly to life. Yet, life is better than death. And life, the life of our innermost soul, although love may sit on the threshold of that innermost forbidden chamber, is solitary. Solitary, but not empty; for in it there is enshrined, in that sanctuary inaccessible to all but ourselves, the great and only divinity: the god that consoles, and sympathizes, and encourages, and satisfies—the ideal."

At the end of the black village street the sea was heaving in smooth, dull, grey masses, with a heavy regular sough. The moonlight, as they came into the open, seemed to seek the inner curl of the waves, filling it with vividest silver, and lighting up the white, powdery surf under some posts in the water, whose shadow was fantastically profiled, now on the white dust of the surf, now on the quicksilver of the wave, now on the scarce washed-over sand. And further on,

behind the dam of big stones, the sea, beneath the widening moonlight, seemed to swell, swell and rise, as if to swamp and submerge the whole world.

II

"I have been thinking about our talk of yesterday, my dear Baldwin," said Signora Elena, as they sat on the terrace of the house overlooking the sea, "and must tell you that I don't believe you really, permanently feel like that; or, if you do, you must be broken of it before it becomes a habit. You do not shrink from duty of any sort; but you shrink from those sorts of pain without which, I am more and more persuaded, no duty can be properly performed. Unconsciously you seem to have got hold of the ideal of a certain German friend of mine who said that the aim of life should be to grow old decently—'anständig alt zu werden.'"

"But," put in Althea, seated on the grass and looking at the sea with half-closed eyes, her boy's hat drawn over them, wondering at the changing shapes and colours, "is that such a bad aim? One could not do much harm in the world if one kept it steadily in mind."

"It is merely," answered Baldwin, "giving to old age the place which death has occupied in certain schemes of existence, considering it a final loss of all things which we can make easy only by gradual and constant renunciation. No, I do not at all agree with your German friend, Signora Elena. The aim of life,

or rather, I should say, the reward of a life properly lived, should be and is the exemption from old age. For surely, although there is a natural diminution in bodily and mental vigour, the greater part of the bankruptcy of old age should be put to the account of riotous living or of lazy indifference. And therefore it seems to me that old age, in so far as an evil to be expected (an evil often greater to others than to oneself), must be forestalled not by a process of denudation or shrinkage, of detachment from things which already detach themselves from us, but rather by a resolute enlarging of our personality and its spiritual possessions, of our share in the life of the world."

It seemed to them, as they sat there on the terrace, that this life of the world was vividly brought before them by the things they saw and heard, the sea rushing in and the sun dispersing the clouds, and the wind heaping them up again in great bars and masses. Sun and wind and sea, freshness and warmth and life, a permeating, overwhelming complexity of sensations and feelings, manifold, wonderful, indescribable; expanses of sparkling blue, bars of violet water beneath the cloud-bars, currents and pools of turquoise green, wash of pale buff where the surf dies out, great various blending movements of the sea in front, the sea which taught the old craftsmen to make their mosaic vaults and God to make the peacock. Sea and wind and sun, ever varying colours and ever varying sound, the music of the surf containing all manner of instruments and

phrases : the swish of the wave unfurling and rushing forwards, the hiss of the water torn into foam on the rocks, the rattle of the wave falling back on its successor hurtling along the shingle, the great boom of the water gathered up and crashing down on itself—all things these, of which we think as being so simple, as we think also of our mood in their presence, but wonderful, complicated in reality, made up of endless other things ; feelings and impressions also, drenching us, rolling us, carrying us on their surface, drowning us in their depths, as we feel ourselves carried along, overwhelmed, by the rushing sea sound.

“ Yes,” said Signora Elena, “ but how can that be if we hold aloof from others, allowing them to be only subjects for duty and objects of æsthetic contemplation, seeking to avoid all contact such as brings those ‘ uneasy pleasures and fine pains,’ as Emerson calls them, which Baldwin described to us last night ? For our life, were it as it ought, should be a gradual assimilation of the standards, the ideals, the potentialities even of others, a growing better, for having made one’s own the wisdom, the virtue, and largely the repugnances that constitute the moral wealth of the great world without. Each one of us, of the better at least, brings into the world some virtue to which he is more particularly inclined, or the remarkable aversion for some particular fault ; and, by the action of individual on individual, these excellences become common property, each man tending to practise, or at least to desire, some

virtue not inherent in his own nature, and each man also making his neighbour more squeamish towards the vices which he himself could never stomach. We are born simple, poor, thin ; the rest of mankind makes us (if we are of the right kind) take body, strength, and shape in the process of maturing ; indeed, there can be no maturity without such process. People who never come to live on the life of the community do not grow, are stunted, barren, and end in deformity. Of such men and women who, when once the sap of youth is dried up, grow thin, acid, and useless, we have all had experience."

"Undoubtedly," answered Baldwin, "the good are those who grow constantly wiser and better, thriving on the world's goodness. But this does not disprove that, although we assimilate the qualities of others, our real life must, as I fear, take place in solitude. There is, for instance, a sort of turning-point in life, at least in the life of many, when we make the choice—or rather the choice is made by our nature—between such enriching, refining of our soul, and that impoverishment due to indifference to the welfare of others, and to the good that is in them. This moment, I have noticed, is often contemporaneous with that falling off of the common beauty, strength and spirits of youth, after whose loss so many of us seem to undergo a strange transformation. For it would seem that there is in youth a certain liberation of energies, a balance of vitality left over by the cessation of mere growth, and

continuing to be called forth for awhile in answer to the claims which growth so recently made; and this surplus of life induces in us a very wrong notion of the individual; what we like, admire, and confide in is not really he or she, but the common graciousness of evanescent youth. Add to this that while such bounty of universal accident ceases, the claims and the friction of life increase; and a poor nature, instead of growing rich by the pressure of demands, demands which it can no longer satisfy, is speedily reduced to bankruptcy. So that, unless we assimilate, we must inevitably deteriorate."

Althea had been listening very attentively, with that curious expression of hers, as if a new light were being shed upon many holes and corners of her soul.

"But," she said,—“how shall I express it?—have we a right even to become better, in a certain sense, to prevent our own deterioration, at the expense of others?”

“How can one become better at the expense of others,” asked Baldwin, “since becoming better means becoming more useful and less noxious?”

“Why, then, we may surely be becoming more useful and less noxious to some people at the price of suffering to others. I cannot see why we should expect that it should be otherwise—why, in a world full of physical misery and wrong, we should expect everything to be delightful in the category of our highest pleasures and duties: if simple matters are full of

○ imperfection, how much more so the most complicated matters in the world ! Signora Elena has been talking about assimilation ; but does not assimilation imply eventual exhausting of the thing assimilated ? I don't know much about human beings and their feelings, but it seems to me that two creatures cannot always find each other equally enchanting and satisfying. We consume all things ; it is absurd to expect that we should not also consume human creatures and be consumed by them in our turn. Life is perpetual change : the very movement which makes our interests and our loves alters them and obliterates. Such variations, such exhausting of one thing after another, is our life ; it is our constant striving onwards to new experience. But when it comes to our fellow-creatures, we may surely be buying our development at the price of their pain. And when it can be obtained only at this price, there seems no reason why any of us precious creatures should have this full life, this full experience. The answer of that Prince or Minister is constantly coming to my mind : ' Il faut vivre, monseigneur ! ' ' Je n'en vois pas la nécessité.' Faust left Gretchen because he wanted further experience, in the shape of the Young Witch, Helen of Troy, and I suppose dozens of others besides. But why should Faust have had that additional experience at the expense of poor Gretchen's misery ? Why should he have had the Young Witch and Helen ? Our desires betray us often into the absurdity of supposing them to constitute rights. We

desire, we require novelty, romance, fulness of experience, high development. But what of that? We desire justice also in the world, yet we do not find that; and it seems to me, so long as it is justice only in the abstract and to others, we sit down contentedly enough without it."

"So then," said Signora Elena, looking at the girl tenderly and admiringly, "Baldwin has forsworn human affections because he has found them a source of pain to himself; and you, my dear Althea, have made up your mind to avoid them lest they should snare you into giving pain to others?"

Althea did not answer, but rose from the grass and went to look at the sea.

Over the sea the wind had built a bridge, straight, flat, stretching from headland to headland, of white cumulus marble, beneath which flowed the currents of deep lustrous blue, of enamel green; and behind which, far away, was cast its own shadow, a deep violet band on the water. The cumulus marble, as the sun rose slowly and gained strength, softened into something of looser texture, equally luminous but more granulated and crisper, great bales and heaps of purest snow, making one understand, in a way, the faint ridge of white, distant ice Alps in the offing. The sea swayed under the big cloud-bridge, luminous, sparkling, deep blue, turquoise green, unsteady bars of violet shadow; the moving waters massing themselves into ridges, rising, arching into solid crests, scooped, hollow, heavily

poised; the green arch bending, toppling, crashing down into foam, running along, white breasts and manes now of the sea-chariot emerged, hurrying along the smooth, white, glassy highway made by the passing of the last wave.

Althea remained on the parapet, watching those sea-courers, the wave running along, as it were, on all fours, careful never to rise till it comes to the stone of the shore, and there, as it leaps up, suddenly caught by the backward impulse of the wave that has gone before, and has just leaped vainly up into foam, driven back a subsiding of hissing surf, rolling the rattling stones as it goes, lying down, arched and smooth for the next wave to rush forward in its turn, filling one's ears with such various sounds, which merge into one—roar, and rattle, and hiss, and great re-echoing crash, overwhelming, yet so deep, that a voice at one's elbow would be rude and loud in comparison.

"She may understand that—what the sea has to say, and why it is uneasy in mind," said Baldwin, nodding in the direction of Althea, "and I fancy she would be spoilt for one, that she would lose some of her odd charm if she could understand human seethings and moanings as well—understand them from experience, from within, and not merely as a subject for indignation or pity. She cannot understand wanting anything, except a map, as it were, to show one the paths of duty. But you, Signora Elena, ought to be kinder and more just towards me; you once quoted

Emerson's expression about friendship's 'uneasy pleasures and fine pains'—well, you must know them. And you must admit that, to a creature at all imaginative, but unable to make friends, like Lady Althea, with the waves, and winds, and clouds, such idealizing affection must hold out the temptation of being made the highest, most exquisite ministrant to the cravings of our poor, idealizing self. What is any art, after all, but the giving of one side only of the living creature, of a portion of its suggestiveness, its promise and its fascination? The pleasure to be derived from exploring the unknown, from supplementing it with our imagination, which is the pleasure of a new friendship, stands to the pleasure which art or literature can give, as the fascination of a living creature, moving, shifting, taking on every second new aspects of beauty, does to the fascination of a mere painted picture. In the new friend there is, for a while, the realization of the ideal, the exquisite delight, at least, of feeling that the ideal is within one's grasp. But the ideal escapes, the desire fails. Even granted that any melody is as really exquisite as when it first flashed across our memory, it is quite certain that no melody is such that we can listen to for ever. The idealizing faculty is for ever insatiate, for ever demanding new food. All this is natural enough and legitimate, as long as we deal with art; but art is fiction, made to be fiction, and human beings are real, moulded out of reality, their own and ours; and is that reality, which means suffering, to

be trifled with? Lady Althea, from her intuition of saving pain for others, and I, from my experience of pain to myself, have come to much the same conclusion."

"The conclusion of helping folk without loving them," answered Signora Elena. "But you are both wrong, and both would be defeating your own end. I have let you both have your say, and now I am going to answer you." She had taken Baldwin's arm, and walked slowly to where Lady Althea was still standing, absorbed in the sea, or in her own thoughts. "You are thinking," she said, with that gentle obstinacy, that indulgent resolution, as of a person who understands how an error could arise, and is patient in setting it right, "that the life which you advocate—your life of helpfulness to the unknown or indifferent, of shrinking from contact lest you should hurt or be hurt—does not, somehow or other, harmonize with the life of the air and the water around you, that it seems out of place in a world which lives in this way," and she nodded towards the rolling sea and the rolling clouds overhead. "But you answered your own objections unconsciously when you said in your plea for solitude of soul that there is no reason why we should have all we crave for; why, as you said, Faust should leave Gretchen for the Young Witch and for Helen. Perhaps the struggle in the moral world—the struggle for life there, a very different one from that of claw and beak—is really much more like what the sun, and the sea, and the wind, and the rocks are showing us now, each

struggling, breaking against the other, their victories and defeats making the beautiful life of the world; not the sea saying to the cliffs, 'I will lie calm, and let you alone,' and the cliffs answering, 'We will become friable, and turn into mud at your touch,' and the wind and sun agreeing to have nothing to do, either of them, with the clouds—a sort of general running away of the various instincts of our nature, each afraid of damaging and being damaged, which would make the soul as fine a sop as the world would be, if the elements came to terms, and agreed on staying quiet. Our spiritual life must be neither a continual struggle to have, nor a continual giving up; but refusing nothing legitimate to ourselves and to others, weighing the claims of both, a continual stirring, seeking, refraining and renouncing, the manifold activity of which can never be replaced by any sweeping sacrifice of others, or any sweeping self-renunciation."

"You mean, then," answered Althea, slowly, "that Faust ought to seek for further experience, but not at the expense of Margaret?"

"It sounds very humdrum, but that is what it comes to: do not squash your own nature for the benefit of others, for others will require, very likely, some of the very things in you which you are squashing; but trample upon every individual temptation of yours that makes light of other folk's happiness. Life, as you said, my dear Althea, is perpetual change. All we need see to is that this fact remains well in our

mind ; that the cry 'always,' into which all vivid emotion translates itself, should no longer deceive us or others ; and that, knowing ourselves to be variable, we should provide that others should suffer as little as possible by our tendency to vary ; that they should expect it, or if they cannot expect it, should be saved the pain of our variation by our refusing to vary."

"In fact," put in Baldwin, "your philosophy, dear Signora Elena, is that there are no royal roads to justice and generosity ; but that we must seek them, like everything else, along paths where, unless we keep our eyes continually before us, we shall perpetually stumble."

Althea seemed puzzled.

"But, Signora Elena," she said, after a moment, "such consideration for the feelings of other folk necessarily implies a diminution in our liberty, in that very liberty without which right behaviour is impossible. Fidelity towards individuals is inevitable as a moral consequence of dependence upon individual affection. But does not fidelity of this sort imply a wilful blindness to that individual's defects, or a more degrading acceptance thereof ? Ought we not to think of another kind of fidelity—fidelity towards our own better self, our better moments ; determination never to lose any higher possibility or higher habit, or higher accidental advantage that may come to us ? Fidelity, I won't say to the ideal, because nobody knows what the ideal is, and it seems to degenerate into mere words, but towards the nobler reality."

Signora Elena shook her head.

"Fidelity towards our best moments, my dear Althea, is fidelity towards our best friends. It is not true, as Baldwin said last night, that our highest innermost life must take place in solitude. That is the case only when what we have taken for friendship is a mere imaginative fancy, the thing made of 'wine and dreams' of Emerson; or when what stirs within us, mistaken for the ideal, is the mere craving for the submission of other souls to our soul, or the mere restless desire for novelty. On the contrary, I should venture to say that in our innermost soul, in the place where the baser parts of our nature dare not intrude, the best and the happiest of us will find always the soul, the judgment, the example, the trustfulness, of another. For, imperfect as we all are, we require each other's more perfect parts; and every true friendship, every noble love, will represent some fragment, smaller or larger, of a perfection that we require. For all noble love means such an adjustment, natural and spontaneous, that our loved ones will possess our higher qualities in higher degree, or other high qualities which we lack, and which we must borrow to lessen our baseness."

Baldwin smiled bitterly. "But," he objected, "you have yourself said that we are not equal in endowments, that we have all got good qualities and bad. Then will not such friendship imply, as Lady Althea said, a certain departure from our own higher standards in our acceptance of the baser side of those we love?"

"We never love the baser sides—those that are really base to our consciousness. What we love is the better in them, and what they love, if capable of real love, is the better in us ; so that while we are purified, we may also be purifying. For nothing is more valuable than the assistance of those whose nature, unconscious of certain of our temptations, shames us out of them, making us feel how paltry, how accidental is the value we see in some things, how simple it is to do or to refrain from certain others. We are for ever showing one another a portion, realized, incarnate, of that great abstract of better things which you call the ideal. Indeed, I think such a partial ideal, vested in human individuals, is better for our nature than the abstract ideal personified in a supernatural being ; we are less often called upon to do the impossible, to strain until we break and despair ; we are less often also let off by the sense of our incompetence to reach higher things. Humanity is human, knowing human bounds ; and the very faults which we find in our friends ought to encourage us to attain to some of their virtues. The more that is asked of us (when asked by the quiet trust of one we love), the more we are able to give. In all of us who have a little moral health, our doing and refraining is greatly commensurate with the trust placed in us by others."

They were silent for a few moments. The sun, getting hotter and hotter, was melting the big cumulus balls of that bridge stretched in mid sky from headland

to headland. Its snow was becoming less crisp (before you might have almost heard its scrunch) and dazzling, and was dissolving to grey ragged vapours, dissolving and dissolving, which the wind drove before it inward to land. Then the bridge disappeared, and the blue sky was clear.

"I quite agree," said Baldwin, "that we grow, as in the physical, so in the moral order also, by assimilation from without. Our self, as you said, is, to a large extent, the rearrangement of those other selves whom we have met and lived with; the originality of our personality being shown in the new pattern made out of these old materials. Can we doubt it? Is not our mind the collection of things outside us, sights, sounds, words—the thoughts and feelings of other folk, transmuted by the necessities of our special nature? Let us examine our consciousness, independent and original creatures that we are, and answer sincerely, how much it would contain had we never come in contact with others, in reality or in books? Where do I end, and you begin? Who can answer? We are not definite, distinct existences, floating in a moral and intellectual vacuum; we are for ever meeting, crossing, encroaching, living next one another, in one another, part of ourselves left behind in others, part of them become ourselves: a flux of thought, feeling, experience, aspiration, a complex, interchanging life, which is the life eternal, not of the individual, but of the race."

"But all this," added Baldwin, suddenly, "may

surely exist apart from such personal feeling as you advocate. Cannot we admit at once that people are prose, good prose or bad, and take them with the same calmness with which we read a book? You see I am still tormented by the doubt whether we human creatures are not always in danger of preying upon one another, unless deliberately chained up with the chain of indifference; whether friendship, when it does not mean mere dull jogging side by side, must not imply as Emerson seems to have thought (and Emerson is the great expert of friendship), not merely the absorption of one by the other, but the actual exhausting one another of all that can please and profit, even as we exhaust the air of the oxygen which we require. . . . It is certain that there comes a moment when the charm of pursuit, of discovery, of the unknown, must end. Or rather when the qualities which come under our notice are merely such as we do *not* care for, because we had quickly discovered and enjoyed those for which we could care; when we get to know the residuum, which, to us, is trash. . . . It is terrible to feel that one has burned up or out another soul; there is a sense of awful humiliation in this recognition when we do recognize. It seems an insult to all one's better feelings. Infinitely rather the bitterness of seeing that oneself has been exhausted by another, that one has done all one's poor little tricks, sung all one's poor little songs. . . ."

Baldwin was silent, and for a moment Signora Elena

did not answer. Only, to break the silence, Althea said, very quietly,—

“Yes, but why should people consume one another? Why live on each other, and nothing else? Surely there is something false in that. It seems to me that friendship, if it could exist, should be the journey, side by side, of creatures living off the same interests, the same aspirations, staying together because they both were attracted by the same things. I don’t know, of course, but it seems as if creatures impelled merely towards each other must necessarily, after meeting, pass one another, pushed onward in opposite directions, or, at least, towards new objects, by the very wants and wishes which had brought them together. Surely people might see the reality, and feel naturally in their affections as much as in anything else.”

Signora Elena shook her head. “I doubt it,” she said; “we cannot prevent ourselves—some at least—from weaving what Emerson calls the textures of wine and dreams. But is it not sufficient if, once the cob-web of imagination broken through, we recognize the solid reality underneath? If the human being be cherished in place of the phantom, not in the same way, but perhaps in a measure for its sake? Could we even be brought close to reality unless decoyed by fancy? Prose remains; good prose, holy prose, often infinitely more satisfying than the poetry; but who is he that searches after prose? We are not like Saul, who went to seek for his asses and found a kingdom.

No prosaic useful thing would make us stir ; we must be baited by the unattainable. Even if the idealizing fancy should bring us down upon prose, bruised, and having bruised it, remember that it has brought us in contact. But for it we might have walked on a mile apart. After all, if the prose of others is noble, and our own prose noble, the two nobilities will coalesce. But we require both poetry and prose. If we sought in our friendships for only poetry we should be libertines, wasters, destroyers. But poetry is what moves ; prose what retains us. Friendship is, after all, something akin to wedlock ; only, being restrained by none of wedlock's legal and natural bonds, and not limited to one individual, of a freer, more sensitive sort ; and yet wedlock begins, or should begin, in the love of the unreal. No ; let us not despise that seemingly selfish, seemingly barren love for the perfect, desire for the unattainable ; through it we rise to better things, find them within our reach. Do not let us despise even the foolish courtship of friends, if there comes from it the sincere and honest *marriage of true minds*. You are not what I thought to pursue in you, but pursuing the unreal nobility I become ennobled, and when possessing the real prosaic excellence I am enriched."

"You speak like Mr Baldwin," remarked Althea. "You seem to admit all his notions of poetry, of unreality, of exaltation ; then, how is it that you do not come to his conclusion—namely, that all this poetry and unreality and fervour can lead only to bitterness ?"

"Because I think," answered Signora Elena, "that there enters into my calculation an element which both—you, with your stoical sense of duty, and Baldwin, with his æsthetical pessimism—have somehow left out of account: the simple, commonplace thing called love. It is love which, as in all other matters, is the trustiest opponent of that tendency to prey upon each other, in whatever sense. Love prevents that lassitude, that bitterness of which Baldwin has spoken; it removes all fear of wearing out or being worn out. It knows nothing either of novelty or of satiety, for it is, essentially, the caring for a creature because it *is itself*; the act of preferring, because one has preferred. Love gives us trustfulness, patience, and, in a way, fairness. All these, of course, we ought to possess towards every man and in all cases; and some day, when earth becomes heaven, we doubtless shall; only that day has not yet come. We have indeed no intellectual right to trust all men, since they so often, willingly and unwillingly, deceive us; it is our duty to weigh them, and often to throw away when found wanting. The world at large is bound to teach us a vast amount of well-deserved suspicion; nay, a good deal of that we learn, as Baldwin was saying yesterday, from the consciousness of the poorness of our own stuff, and the multiplicity of our own adulterations. At all events, it is not by contact with the rank and file of our fellow-creatures that we can be educated to that readiness to wait for further evidence, that giving of credit,

which are so necessary for all dutiful action. These things are taught us, at the expense, alas! sometimes of base endurance of evil—by those whom we love, whom our soul cannot afford readily to lose; to keep whom, and our opinion of whom, we are willing to wait and trust an infinity. Nay, more important still, love alone by making us care, not for a mere quality, a mere pleasure-giving item, but for an individual, not for a mere momentary impression, but for a life—love can teach us to do what philosophy and justice clamour in vain for: to take the bad with the good, to consider the bulk of a creature's merits and demerits, not to throw away what is precious, because of some alloy; not to yield, above all, to the momentary superiority of the sound piece of *I* which happens (the whole case reversible the next minute) to come into momentary contact with an unsound piece of *Thou*——”

“In short,” put in Baldwin, “you consider what you call *love* as the banker of our good impressions, and generous and also just appreciations, enabling us to tide over difficult moments, giving that highest of moral, as of economic, requisites, *credit*.”

“You have expressed it perfectly, so perfectly that I believe, in your heart of hearts, you agree with me, Baldwin. Love identifies us in such mysterious manner with others, that the pain or pleasure which we merely *know* is yet more vivid than such as we in ourselves can actually *feel*. It substitutes the desire for pleasure,

the shunning of the unbearable, for that call of duty which in most things does not succeed in becoming sufficiently imperative. Therefore do not despise ourselves for asking and granting favours, for doing more for those we love than for those who are indifferent. It is a great step, the greatest of all, to be taken out of ourselves, however near by ; and we could not, probably, wish well to mankind, to our kinsmen or countrymen even, if we had not first learned to seek the good of the one and only——”

Althea had been listening with knit brows and parted lips ; she had learned something, but an objection still remained deep in her austere nature.

“ Then,” she remarked, “ to give their due to all men, both in help and in forbearance, and most, perhaps, in understanding ; to do our duty because not to do it would make us too miserable—all this to you is an ideal too high for us poor creatures ; a thing far from attained in any, and perhaps even unattainable. And love—this sort of vicarious selfishness—is to bridge over the gulf between preference for ourselves and justice to others. But there is one point which puzzles me. May we not be acquiring such powers of sympathy, such capacities for justice, at the price of the very opportunities, the very possibilities, of putting them to profit ? Friendship, love—call it what you will—means preference ; and does not preference imply exclusion, and hence want of sympathy, want of justice ? And do we belong so exclusively to ourselves—belong

to hoard or to waste—that we should have the right of giving the whole of us to one other ? ”

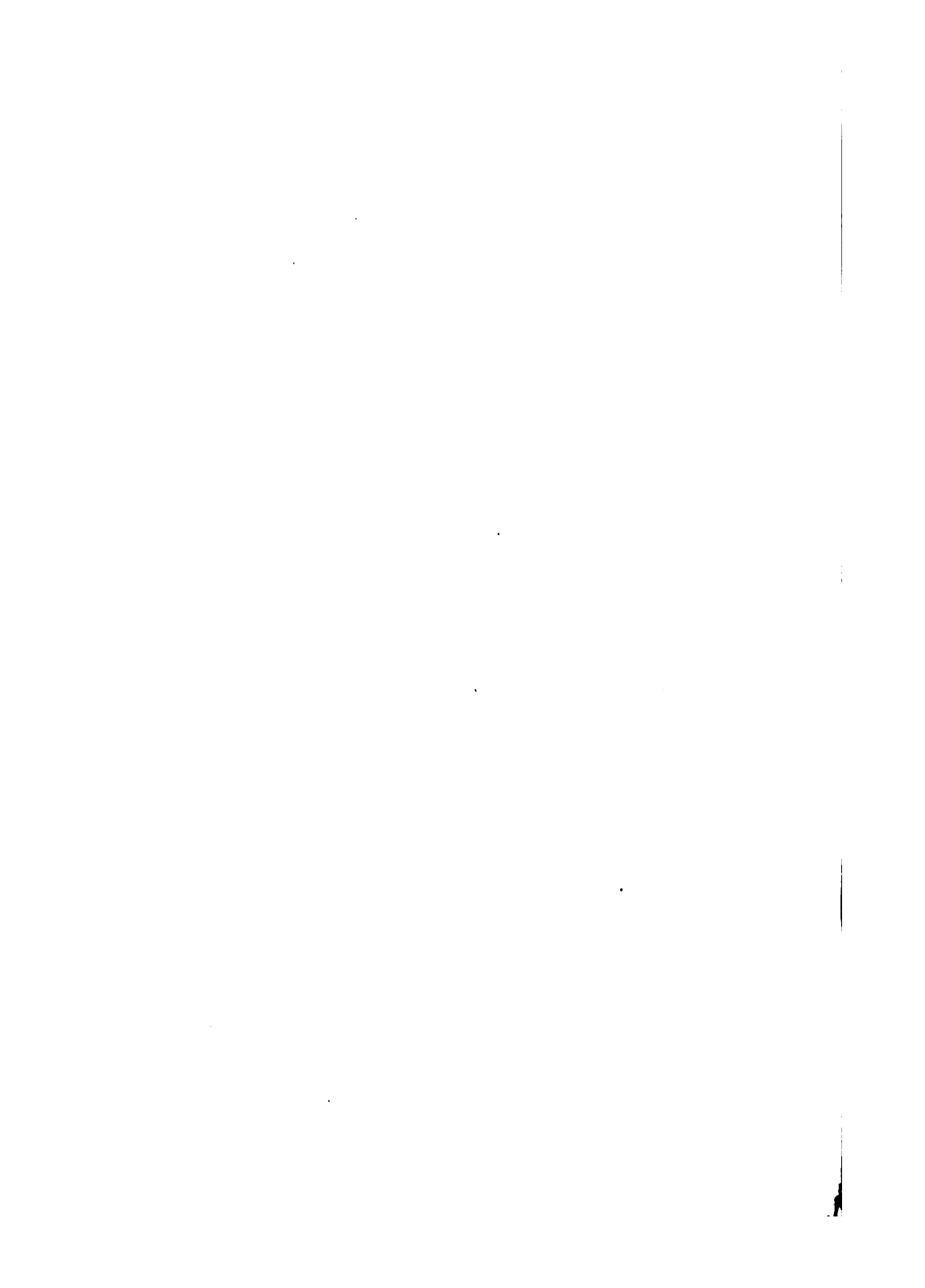
Signora Elena took the hand of her antagonist, so strangely impersonal in her abstract passion for right, and yet, with her youth, her face rather of a beautiful boy than of a woman, and her restrained tenderness of manner, so very lovable.

“ I think,” she answered, “ that the answer to your objection is contained in my very recommendation to do what you still question. If we hoard or waste our soul, as you say, for the benefit of one other, cheating the rest of the world of the very fruits of that habit of loving-kindness, we are loving not too much, but too little. We must be absolutely generous and liberal in order to be just. In giving the whole of ourself to one idea, we cheat another of its due influence ; in giving ourselves to one person, we are depriving of their legitimate portions all those others, whether at our hearth in humble matters, or among the unseen crowd, attainable only to our most general thought, who require us. We must love, and let ourselves be loved by, many. For the use of us, as of everything else in this world, my dear Althea, is to be consumed and assimilated : we are the food and fuel of one another.”

Althea did not answer. She rose from the grass, where she had been sitting, and walked silently along the shore. The sea was shifting its patterns of sparkling blue, of peacock, of enamel green and violet ; the waves rushing along, making and unmaking themselves,

hissing and hurtling and booming against the stones ; the sunshine seeming to swirl all round. She did not say anything more on the subject of their conversation, but when, much later, they said good-night, she kissed the hand which Signora Elena extended, and departed in silence, which seemed more meaningful than words.

ABOUT THE SOCIAL QUESTION



ABOUT THE SOCIAL QUESTION

I

THAT solemn Roman landscape, where the hillock whose grass your horse tramples may have been a great city before Rome was, had brought its usual thoughts of time and instability.

"Then," said Donna Maria, suddenly, broaching a subject she had instinctively avoided, "you no longer believe in Socialism, Cousin Boris?"

The young Russian smiled bitterly. He felt acutely the contrast of the Boris of to-day, as well-groomed as the horse he rode, accompanying a rich and pretty woman on her errands of sentimental archæology, and the Boris of four years ago, who had written to her, with hands grimy from breaking-up types, that he had thrown in his lot with the industrious and the oppressed.

"Socialism," he answered, "is a very big word, and one which women of the world are apt . . ."

"Yes, yes," she cried, "which women of the world are apt to employ merely as a term of abuse. You are quite right; I used to be so intemperate when I was young! But I have really tried to be fair; I have read a lot of books, and I have understood what your

former friends think. Let the State only suppress money, confiscate capital, regulate the production of commodities in national factories and their exchange by means of soup-tickets, and there will be an end of injustice, misery, and crime. They have the social mechanism, every piece numbered and labelled, ready to hand, fit for putting up! Happy people! They need scarcely stir, barely think, and certainly never repeat that silly Christian trick of self-sacrifice; next year they may take to any convenient form of lotos-eating, for, of course, they will have twenty hours of leisure. I forgot; the State will have decided what sort of plant the lotos really is, and which is the best way of cooking it."

Donna Maria spoke with an air of impetuous relief; and when she had done, she began stroking her horse's neck, as if she had just finished a long gallop. Althea noticed the movement, and understood; but she could not understand why her friend always spoke on this subject as if she were impartial, and always looked exasperated.

"You are right, my cousin," answered the Russian, after a brief silence. "Socialists *are* happy, happy people. I was very happy when I could still believe that the world's misery is all due to an easily altered system. To return to your question: Yes, I no longer believe in Socialism, I no longer believe that the mischief comes from speculation or lending at interest; nor that the State is the same thing as society, nor that

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society may enslave its own members ; still less that by making laws you can change hearts. All these Socialistic remedies have come to mean, in my eyes, merely so much juggling, transferring prosperity from one pocket to the other, and losing a good deal in the transfer. I no longer believe in a single one of their remedies, but I wish to Heaven I did. I wish I could still believe that a clean sweep can be made of all this inequality and injustice, which means waste—waste of wealth, of feeling, of energy, of time ; waste of those who are rich and of those who are poor. Ah, I wish I could remain a Socialist still.”

“ But are you sure,” asked Althea, as if repeating to herself some thought which was uppermost in her mind, “ are you sure that there is no other remedy than that of the Socialist for us to believe in ? ”

But Boris took no notice of her words.

“ Please do not think,” he continued, passionately, “ that my feelings have changed because my beliefs have altered. I hate as much as all the Socialists rolled into one the state of things of which we and they, and all our respective follies, are all equally a result. I would go round the world, if hatred could not take care of itself, teaching the people to hate all our boasted civilization, either reduced to the barest necessities, physical and moral, or clogged with unuseable comforts and pleasures. For I hate your unequally distributed wealth, still worse your unequally distributed leisure—meaning overwork and stupidity on the one hand, and

enmity and stupidity on the other. I hate the lack of freely circulating life and experience, the barrier of useless possessions and covetous necessities which divide us from one-half of our fellows. I hate, above all, the hypocritical twaddle which calls the rich classes the educated, and confounds their self-indulgence with refinement."

They rode on for awhile in silence—the young Russian exhausted by his own violence ; Donna Maria, taken aback, grieved like a good child suddenly scolded ; and Althea stifling indignation at what seemed to her personal and intemperate. They were crossing some low undulations of grass, greening again after the winter's sering, and with a faint wintry grey in its green that made one think of northern dunes. Around them was that vast emptiness : no house or tree attempting to intrude, and fences and ditches not interrupting its long low lines ; a full, brown stream, sluggishly tugging at the swamped willows, not visibly breaking its surface ; green emptiness bounded by the blue hills, their tops powdered with the last spring snow, and on whose flanks the gathering white cumulus clouds cast slowly-moving shadows. A dip in the ground, and the mountains disappear, and the clouds with them save such as have got broken off and roll vaguely about, greyish-white balls, in the high blue sky, making you realize how infinitely high, fathoms and miles, and thousands of miles, that blue vault really is. A dip, and then a little ascent, cleared by the horses so quickly

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that you scarcely realize it ; the cloud chain reappearing, and under it the chain of blue snow-powdered hills ; and once at the top, the great grey-green emptiness reappearing also, rolling away on all sides.

" You have told us what you hate," said Donna Maria at last, a little tremble of emotion in her voice ; " things which, after all, we perhaps hate as much as you. . . ."

" I trust you do not, dear cousin," interrupted Boris, sarcastically, " for I should be sorry to think your delightful Greek serenity hid as uncomfortable a soul as mine."

" As much as you, but not perhaps in the same way, Boris ; for I think that in your Socialist days you talked yourself into the Socialist belief—the belief with which Socialists sow class hatred wherever they go—that the rich are deliberately and systematically oppressing the poor, that they hate them, and that the poor ought simply to hate them back as hard as they can. It makes me quite miserable, because, besides the folly and wickedness implied in all hatred, it seems to me that you are wasting so much invaluable moral capital, so much power for good. The upper classes cannot of course bring to the work the energy of personal interest, of envy and hatred ; but are these efficacious feelings not very two-edged tools—I don't know whether your system of ethics allows me to employ so feudal an adjective as *base* ? Is not the energy of disinterested morality and benevolence as good, and

better ? That it exists in less amount I am forced to admit ; any ruffian may desire such social reorganization as will benefit himself ; whereas the man who can desire what will not be for his own bettering, and may be to his detriment, is not by any means so common. And the number of interested persons—I will not say even mean and selfish ones—among the lower class is undoubtedly greater than that of the disinterested, exceptional souls among the upper ; so that the force of envy and hatred is likely to be greater than that of sympathy and justice. But should we therefore waste the lesser in quantity, the better in quality ? And will not the world require every scrap of decent disinterestedness, of cultivated feeling, of sober thought, to prevent this sea of covetousness and vindictiveness and ignorance from overwhelming all noble and beautiful things ? ”

Althea had been listening attentively as they rode along, her eyes fixed on those distant cloud-hills, and on a group of stone-pines and a kind of castle which had appeared in sight, the first incident for miles among those pale-green grassy billows.

“ I think,” she said, “ that the upper classes should not allow any good there is in them to be wasted. I don’t mean merely for their own sake, though Heaven knows how many of them lose by not knowing their own duties ; I have seen so much of that : honest and intelligent creatures becoming daily more enslaved by the various fleshpots—material, æsthetic, or what they

call social, which is in reality the very reverse of social ; their lives consumed in a routine of waste of money, food, time, energy, thought, sometimes of a kind of heroism even ; doing things which ' have to be done ' not because these things are useful or even pleasant, but because their doing has become systematic. And such enslavement to the fleshpots—sometimes due to sheer ignorance that the world contains any other interests—to the clothes, carriages, titles, dinner-tables, and grouse moors, all things which only the rich can possess and the idle can attend to—means sacrifice of many nobler things for the sake of those fleshpots ; certainly sacrifice of much true happiness as well as possible usefulness. Maria accuses the Socialists of wasting the good that might be got out of the upper classes ; but, really, I think it is rather the upper classes who are guilty of this wastefulness. For in these upper classes—I hate that ridiculous *upper* and *lower*—if there is a waste of material wealth which other folk are famishing for, there is nearly as great a waste of intellectual and moral wealth : mind and culture and leisure become barren for lack of generous impulse ; generosity and tenderness grown mischievous for want of thoughtfulness and knowledge."

" Exactly so ! " exclaimed Donna Maria, enthusiastically ; " it is this which I want to prevent ! Of course I understand ! "—and her charming mobile child's face grew very grave—" that a better distribution of wealth would immensely increase the possibility

of decent living, of usefulness and happiness in both classes, the one which possesses too much, as well as the one which possesses too little. For of course it is evident how difficult sobriety, purity, industry, and honesty must be in certain positions—not merely the less comfortable ones created by our present imperfect repartition of wealth ; just as it is evident that education and the leisure necessary thereunto can be fully attained by every one when only economic relations are greatly modified. But it is equally certain, only people don't choose to see it, that these economic relations cannot be really improved, that opposing classes of strong unscrupulous creatures, and of weak and demoralized ones, cannot be secured against, until whatever possibilities of sobriety, purity, industry, honesty, and gentleness, now being wasted, be turned to their full account ; until the leisure, education, and generous impulse already available be really turned to profit. Since all real improvement in the world's condition must be very gradual, extending over much time and ramifying in many directions, we must do all in our power to help this slow movement by removing old obstacles and forestalling new ones. I don't believe in the efficacy of a mere change of forms, any more than in the alteration of mere names ; I believe we must persistently work at the renovation of the very material of human progress—the human heart and mind. That is why I consider it positively criminal, both on the side of rich folk who won't do it, and of

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your Socialists who try to prevent them—positively criminal that the privileged classes should not be turned to account in thinking and feeling for those unprivileged classes who cannot yet think or feel for themselves. . . .”

“But how do you know that the unprivileged classes cannot yet think or feel for themselves?” asked Althea, startled by the sweepingness of this assertion.

“Because they are too busy building our houses, weaving our clothes, sweeping our floors, cooking our dinners, and grooming our beasts, my dear Lady Althea,” answered Boris, passing his hand as he spoke over his horse’s sleek neck, and nodding, to mark the contrast, towards a group of peasants, tattered, shaggy, and fever-stricken, who had issued out of one of the reed wigwams dotted about the immense grazing ground.

“Of course they are unable,” went on Donna Maria, regardless of the interruption, but stopping her horse and fumbling in her coat pocket. “Lend me five francs, Boris; I think they ought to have quinine. For it is all very well: the merely material, mechanical, legal monopolies we can gradually strip off, or you can violently strip off us—such as the monopoly of land and of capital—but other monopolies, grown in the centuries to be part and parcel of us, will not be so easy to get rid of, monopolies of thought and feeling; and while we possess them we must see to their being employed, not for mischief, but for the good of the people. I fear,” added Donna Maria, as they cantered off from the huts and their squalid inhabitants, her

vivacious mind suddenly shifting its quarters, "I fear—I fear those people will just play at the lottery with those five francs, and they are so demoralized already! Please, please, Althea, remind me next time we have a ride to get Agostino to make me some little packets of quinine, like those I have for our people in Lombardy. It is shameful that you positively cannot buy unadulterated quinine at village apothecaries'. They take advantage of the poor people who require it so much and pay for it so exorbitantly: that is what comes of the upper classes thinking only of their comforts and amusements."

Even the bitter spirit of Boris was subdued by this characteristic revelation of his cousin's personality. He remembered how his old friend Baldwin used to compare her to the Roman sea-wind: the little gentle breath, warm, kind, scarcely rippling things, making trees bud, flowers bloom, and birds sing in the listener's heart; but at other moments turning into a blustering gale, carrying off hats and cloaks, and pulling up trees by the roots: the sea-wind which shakes up, warms, chills, caresses, outrages by turns, but leaves the world more wholesome and summer-like than before.

"I see," he said, laughing. "The upper classes are to administer moral tonics and fever-powders to the lower, having had the advantage of dealing at large spiritual warehouses, instead of depending on miserable country retailers."

"But do we always give them the same unadulterated

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moral drugs which we swallow ourselves?" asked Althea. "That is the question. And, so far as I can see, it is exactly what we do not, my dear Maria. Before being able to judge correctly *for* the uneducated, we ought evidently to form a correct judgment *about* them. Now, it so happens that we are perpetually judging the lower classes by standards different from those by which we judge ourselves."

"Of course," interrupted Donna Maria, "we can't ask as much of them as of ourselves; so we *must* have two standards."

Althea looked at her friend for a moment with that puzzled incredulity with which she always met cases of self-delusion or insincerity.

"So one might expect. But, as a matter of fact, we ask much *more* of them than of ourselves. We insist upon every virtue from the class of people to whom such virtue is infinitely more difficult, merely because their bad luck makes it less easy to repair the want of it; while we ask very little of ourselves, because our many advantages make it easier to compensate for our deficiency in virtue. Because we happen to have secured to us certain reserves which we can always fall back upon, a lot of things are legitimate or permissible which in the poor, merely because they are poor, are wicked, unpardonable, and such as to hurry them irremissibly down the bottomless pit. Among my acquaintances is a certain little sempstress; her husband is dying at the hospital; she lives in a tiny

dark, smelly room, and she has got three restless, unruly little children, always up to some mischief. Well, whenever I go to see her, I let her know—I am bound to let her know—how wrong, how very wrong, it is of her—wrong enough, in fact, to deserve that all friends should throw her over—that she should waste time, dawdle in the street, or jabber with the neighbours; be slack, careless, and think of anything, in short, besides getting a certain number of handkerchiefs hemmed by a certain date. Yet the poor creature's circumstances are not conducive to energy and concentration; and her pleasure in life—indeed, her solace in trouble—consists solely in dawdling and jabbering. But I am doing my duty in telling her she is a very reprehensible young woman! Similarly, we all fall ruthlessly upon the working man who marries too early in life; we inveigh against his lack of self-restraint and his grossness; yet he may in reality be following the one call of something human and noble—affection, desire to protect and receive sympathy. Now, if the woman with the dying husband and the three little children were a lady, if the young man wanting to marry his sweetheart had an independent fortune, we should admit that their conduct was very human and proper. . . . Oh, no! I don't say we ought to encourage them in giving way to such human tendencies, since in their case the result would be only disastrous to themselves. I merely remark that our manner of judging those worse off than ourselves is, although per-

haps inevitable, not very just, or merciful, or intelligent. Of course, this is all due to the economic fact, which no Socialistic sophisms can alter, that capital and the abilities required for the management thereof are less plentiful and more in demand than mere labour, and that labour consequently gets the lesser share of the wealth it helps to produce; but it is a mere accident that capital and labour should stand in this particular relation at this particular moment in the world's history, and that we particular individuals should happen to represent capital which gets the large share, and those other individuals labour which gets the smaller one. Of course we give, for instance, food and shelter in return for the work of our servants; but accident has so placed us that *we* get food and shelter, the first cuts off the joint, the fresh dishes, the better rooms and furniture, without any such labour. What are we doing for them, while they are sweeping, and scouring, and cooking for us . . . ? ”

“ Well,” interrupted Boris, “ you for one, Lady Althea, were sweeping, and sewing, and cooking all for yourself when I saw you last in London.”

“ Most of us,” she went on, “ are not doing much—at least, much that can be of use to the hewers of wood and drawers of water. A man or woman of independent means, who desists from crime and vice, taking life merely as a pastime, is a perfectly blameless creature; if the pastime be of an intellectual or artistic type, he or she is even an object of admiration. Oh, yes,

it is quite natural. But the result of it is not pretty. It isn't pretty to censure so freely in others what we admit as proper in ourselves, merely because our circumstances allow us a lot of luxuries of conduct in which those others must not indulge. To them it must seem very much as if, because we are rich, we need never give; and because they are poor, they shall never take. It would be more seemly, don't you think, if, since we can't justify the accident that has given us all the advantages, we should at least justify our right to advise, to reprimand, to say 'Take patience' or 'It must be borne' to those whom accident has given only disadvantages?"

"But that is exactly what I have been preaching all along!" exclaimed Donna Maria. "We should show them that if they must bear much, we also will carry our load; that if they are threatened for ever with material want, we, on the other hand, are driven to work, to read, to think, and experiment and select, by the fear of moral bankruptcy; and it is one of my quarrels with all you Radicals and Socialists," went on Donna Maria, hotly, unconscious of Althea's smile of tender admiration and amusement, "that you prevent the lower classes from realizing the natural division of labour, the give and take of those who work with their hands and those who work with their brains and hearts—or at least who ought to; you, on the contrary, teach the people that progress would move on much quicker if we were to harness the ox and yoke the horse!"

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"I agree in everything you say," answered Lady Althea, riding along, Boris thought, like a sort of equestrian goddess of justice; "only, it happens to be not the Socialists and Radicals, but our own old Conservative society, which is perpetually yoking the horse and harnessing the ox—or at least disposing of its human cattle quite irrespective of their congenital peculiarities. A man who would make an excellent navvy is allowed to be a prince, with a prince's education and responsibilities; a woman who would make a perfect princess does charring, and can scarcely spell: everywhere we see men and women excluded from the places to which, by the grace of Heaven, they were born. Has it never struck you how indifferent we are to Nature's hierarchies, and how large a proportion of human beings are, in the truest sense of the word, *déclassés*?"

"Yes, yes," answered Donna Maria, more anxious to develop her own favourite theory than to do justice to her companion's amendments thereof. "Of course, all that will be adjusted in the long run, and the upper classes will represent all that is best in every condition of life. What I insist upon is, that the upper classes that is to say, the people who have more leisure and comfort and refinement—are, so to speak, paying for their privileges by keeping up the standard of civilization.

"Oh, my dear cousin! is it possible that you, a woman of the world, should believe such a thing as that?" burst out Boris. "Why, have you never

asked yourself what would happen if some day the people, getting tired of such assertions, were to burst in upon us, as Vesuvius burst in upon the people of Pompeii? What objects would they discover in greatest number wherewith to keep up the standard of civilization? Cigars, choice wines, dresses in which it is impossible to do any single useful thing, expensive food, and soft furniture! And engaged in what elevating occupations would they discover those keepers-up of standards?"

"You are not really answering Maria," broke in Althea, "because you must know that she doesn't mean that sort of thing when she talks of keeping up the standard of civilization."

"I suppose Maria doesn't, so I beg her forgiveness," answered Boris, doggedly; "but Maria was listening as well as I when one of her friends propounded, in her drawing-room, the theory that it was all right to have strawberries in January, because it contributed to raise the standard of refined and exquisite living."

They rode on a long while in painful silence, the zigzags of fences alone forming an incident in the endless green undulations which stretched to the mountains and clouds. Suddenly, in an unforeseen hollow, there appeared one of those gaunt buildings, towered farms, fortified villas, you know not which; places whose walls are eaten up with damp and lichen, mud and refuse invading them on all sides, and which yet, with their big buttressed windows and stuccoed chapels,

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their lamentable attempt at luxury, tell of some destination beyond the housing of horses, chickens, and fever-stricken peasants; and make one marvel, every now and again, in one's wanderings about Rome, When and why? What manner of creature could it be that once upon a time tried to trespass on the solitude and malaria of the great, bleak, green plain?

"Let us go towards Rome," said Donna Maria, turning her horse's head, after gazing long and wistfully at the dreary building, which seemed to bring to a focus, with its grim and dreary senselessness, all the grim and dreary problems which were overpowering her cheerful helpfulness of nature. "Oh why is the world like this, and what are we to do?"

"My dear cousin," said Boris, after they had ridden some time in silence—with only the horizon altered, the clouds and mountains exchanged for the low hills of the Tiber valley and the cupola of St Peter's under the slowly sinking sun—"do not think me brutal if I tell you that when you have been made thoroughly miserable by such thoughts, you will have, like me, to give up thinking them; like me as I am beginning to become for I have still but partially recovered my self-possession, as I am afraid I proved by some very violent and rude speeches at the beginning of our ride. It is difficult to become stoical even to the sufferings of other people, but one has to become so. Just before I met you at the city gates I had come across a stone-breaker working along the roadside, and evidently

very far gone in consumption ; his wife was in the hospital ; of his five children, two were ill ; he was gaining a franc and a half a day, and could not afford to stop work on bad days. It isn't a particularly bad case. A franc and a half a day ; why, it is very high pay for this country ; there are places in the Neapolitan provinces where a whole day's hard digging and trenching, including a long walk there and back, owing to the desolation of those parts, is paid only forty centimes. . . . Still, we never feel much unless we see, and the road-mender, with his sixteen pence, affected me more than the Neapolitan peasant with his fourpence. But it is absurd to let oneself be made wretched by such cases. Progress, supposing there is such a thing, must be incalculably slow. Hitherto, in a great many things, there has been next to none. We don't make ourselves miserable, after all, about the millions of creatures who died like beasts while building the pyramids, nor about the millions of slaves lashed and starved throughout antiquity ; of serfs starved and beaten throughout the Middle Ages ; the myriads of wretches trampled and tortured before history ever was."

"Yes, but all that is in the past," exclaimed Donna Maria, impetuously ; "it is gone, done with. But that such misery should endure while we live, our pulsations of pleasure keeping time with other folk's pulsations of pain, this seems outrageous to our feelings ; worst of all, that misery should survive, and survive God knows how long. We cannot, must not, bear that !"

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"That is what I once thought"—and Boris's tone was curiously sad in its coldness—"but that is mere selfish sentimentality in ourselves. Why, forsooth, should misery be more unbearable because it happens to coincide with our valuable stay on earth? That evil in the past was quite as terrible, quite as outrageous, as any in the present; and if it is over so far as individuals are concerned, why, so will this be, thanks to the saving grace of death. Outrageous to our feelings! But what right have we to such feelings? What right have we to be shocked at the inevitable? Look at the faces we meet in the street—ask yourself what are the thoughts, emotions, and habits of their owners, and wonder, if you can, that there is so much misery and filth in the world; nay, wonder, rather, that there is so little. For these people in the street are our friends, brothers, sisters, husbands, wives, and children—they are ourselves! No; it bores me to be told that the upper classes are enjoying themselves out of obligingness to the lower, and that everything is for the best. But at the same time I lose all patience when I see people trying to relieve their uncomfortable feeling at the thought of misery, just as they would relieve any other uncomfortable feeling, merely because it happens to be uncomfortable and in them—"

"Ah!" cried Donna Maria, in one of those fits of self-accusation which were one of the lovable varieties in her lovable and variable nature, "I know something about that sort of thing! In my very small experience

I see two cases which look rather like crimes—miserable children born of fathers in the last stage of consumption, and who distinctly owe their existence to the fostering care of myself and my friends—and we all know nowadays that physical degeneracy may ramify into every sort of moral imbecility and perverseness! And yet I cannot help thinking that, whatever mischief it may occasionally lead to, there is safety and usefulness in the feeling which makes us miserable at others' sufferings; it is an instinct of moral self-preservation for ourselves and others."

Althea nodded.

"I think," she said, "that it is an excellent thing that we should not be able to enjoy ourselves thoroughly in the presence of other people's sufferings; a great amount of the world's suffering is due to the vast majority of us being able, on the contrary, or having been, to enjoy themselves quite equally whether others suffered or not. It is one thing to guard against rash action springing from such feelings, and another to guard, as your cousin pretends one had better guard (only he doesn't really think so), against the feelings themselves; the harm is in the rashness, and rashness is harmful in totally different matters—don't you think? Doing good—or, rather, *doing the right thing* (I don't see why the expression should always be applied to doing what is really doing the wrong thing)—doing the right thing, then, not in the worldly sense, should not be the mere relieving of a want in ourselves—which, of course, may

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be selfishly relieved like any other ; it ought to become the fulfilling of one of the principal functions of life, with only that amount of satisfaction to ourselves which attaches, negatively almost, to the fulfilment of any other function. We ought to want to save other people from pain, as we want to save ourselves, and therefore try not to bungle them into worse pain, and we should try not to bungle ourselves into it. We ought to cultivate our aversion to other folk's pain (not neglecting our own by any means) ; but, at the same time, to train ourselves to see and feel in the future and the distant, minding as much what happens there as what happens nearer ourselves and the present, and sacrifice meanwhile the acutely felt present to a future which we can foretell although we may not as yet acutely perceive. We must train ourselves to disliking injustice and suffering irrespective of where and when, and to dislike it worst only where it really exists in largest amount or acutest degree, closing our ears and eyes to the fallacious appearance, the mere hallucination of our egoism, that things are worse because they happen to be under our eyes : they are not, any more than objects are bigger because they are near. Or rather, I should have said, let us use the present, the near at hand, to learn from it what must be the future and distant, getting to know the larger by our knowledge of the smaller, instead of letting the smaller make us forgetful of the larger. Our business, as rational beings, is to try and understand—is it not ? and to try not to

act, if possible, without understanding at least this much, that in the particular case any action may be preferable to none. The case to which Maria alludes, and in which her good sense was really overridden by the sentimentality of her friends, was an instance of what may result from trying to cut short an individual evil without calculating what new evils may result from the operation.

"Of course I've been repeating a lot of truisms," said Althea, setting her horse gradually to a trot, "but one is apt to forget even truisms in the course of an argument, and after your cousin's plea in favour of hard-heartedness I thought it useful to point out the necessity also of the reverse, more particularly as I am rather a hard-hearted woman myself."

They hurried along the grassy slopes till, suddenly, they met the main road which runs north from Rome, and a great brown bend of the Tiber, the poplars along its banks just barely tipped with delicate yellowish new leaves, the willows in its swirl covered with soft catkins. It had rained here, and everything had that warm, blond quality which lends the Roman landscape a spring-like air almost in winter. The grass here by the riverside was lush-green already, and full of long-stemmed daisies and star anemones, but frosted over with delicate grey withered thistles. Some wild olive trees formed a dark-green tuft upon the slope, and beneath it lay a big sheep-dog, while a man, with goat-skin leggings like a satyr, sat milking a sheep; all

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round about the little new-born lambs were bleating and sucking, snow-white in their newness upon that greenness of new grass. And below, with the wide bend of river, its eddies faintly reddened by the afternoon sun, stretched the green, yellow and brown boggy valley, its faint undulations marked with hay-ricks and long snaking fences.

"The fact is," continued Althea, rather to herself than to her companions, "that we are utterly unreasonable. We wish, we sensitive people, to see all round us a certain amount of comfort. That is to say, to enjoy in ourselves a degree of moral peacefulness, for which the moral expenditure of the world—what we are willing to pay in thought, in abstinence and effort—is utterly insufficient. As with material wealth, so with spiritual, we do nothing but waste; yet we expect to have the means of sending every beggar from our door metamorphosed into a prosperous citizen. We are trying, with our toy pails, to empty out a sea of ignorance and selfishness."

"I don't understand in the least what you are alluding to," answered Donna Maria, briskly.

"And yet we have talked it all over very often with Baldwin," replied Althea, sadly; "and you must have met it often enough in books—you who have always read such a lot."

"Baldwin always irritates me with his cocksureness; however, I'll try and be less irritated next time," rejoined Donna Maria.

Boris laughed his bitter, miserable laugh.

"That is it! Let us read all about it in books; better still, in reviews, which are less boring. Let us talk it over with Baldwin, with Tom, Dick, or Harry—I beg your pardon, with the eminent economist A., the celebrated philanthropist B., and the great idealist philosopher C.—during an interval at dinner, or while we are waiting for the carriage on coming out from the ball, or in one of those charming chats before the lamp is brought in—it, I presume, being the way of diminishing inequality and increasing human welfare without any loss to the great civilization of which we are a part, and our houses and carriages and biblelots also a part. Meanwhile, the Huns and Vandals are also thinking how they may diminish inequality and increase human welfare. But, being hampered by no houses, carriages, biblelots, philosophy, philanthropy, or economics, they will manage the business in a less cautious manner. And there will not remain much of our civilization, of our economists, philanthropists and philosophers—nay, perhaps not much of Hun and Vandeldom—to record what the Huns' and Vandals' method was. And now, good evening; I see your brougham and the groom waiting for your horses. I think my best way home is by the next city gate."

A few gas-lamps made twilight apparent in the wretched muddy suburb of jerry-built houses, from whose windows fluttered unseemly rags. Some carters

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were yelling over their horses and from inside Rome there came a melancholy jangle of bells.

II

The lingering winter had suddenly changed to spring, the Roman spring which is already summer. The dust lay thick along that road where every building is a church or convent, and each dates from the first martyrs ; the dust was like a bloom upon the clematis and elder, where a hedge-row interrupted the high crumbling walls, tufted with seeding grasses and fringed all over with weeds. And the milky pale-blue sky of summer already seemed to draw to it the white of the dust, the white of the stones, the whitish glint on the new leaves, to make of it all that strange symphony in mother-of-pearl, and alabaster and pearl, which, to those who know it, characterizes the South.

"I have asked you to take this dusty walk," said Donna Maria, pushing her veil back and drawing a deep breath of relief and satisfaction, "because, since one can do nothing on this hideous, hideous day except hope it may not be so hideous after all. . . ."

"Good heavens, what do you mean?" interrupted Althea. "Hideous day? Why hideous day, with this sun in the sky?"

"Lady Althea has actually forgotten that this is May Day, that the town is full of troops and police, and that we are awaiting the news of pillage or massacre,"

exclaimed Boris. "Why, the monks in yonder convent are more up to date, for they double-locked the gate in my face, and shouted through the grating, 'Not to-day, because of the Revolution.'"

"You see, at home, one would have been besieged by horrid things—I don't mean besieged by the mob," explained Donna Maria, "but besieged by people's disgusting remarks about what may happen, and by the knowledge of their disgusting thoughts; every one become cowardly or envious, wanting to imprison or shoot the other party, or, rather, get some one else to do so; all telling lies to others and to themselves, the Socialists on the one hand, and the *bourgeoisie* on the other. And one would be besieged also, don't you know, by one's own fear and meanness and willingness that anything should have happened so long as it was all over."

"Instead of which, in this part of the world," answered Baldwin, smiling at her simplicity, so oddly mixed with subtlety, "in this part of the world, with the great ruins all round become terraces and walls of gardens and orchards, and the little early Christian churches built of fragments of pagan temples, you feel consoled, safe in the arms, as it were, of Time, who is really the one safe friend of every one. And the dread of change, the thought of change, diminishes, is dwarfed to nothingness in the presence of all the change embodied everywhere around us."

Donna Maria passed her arm through his. "Ah!"

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she exclaimed, "you understand it, Baldwin. That is why Rome is the place where one can feel most at peace ; and I think, perhaps, the place where one ought to feel least frightened."

"But why should one be frightened anywhere?" asked Althea, with great simplicity. "I mean why should one allow oneself to become so? It has struck me very much, hearing people talk of this first of May, and of the things of which it is the forerunner, that they seem not only to be afraid, but to consider it proper to be afraid. It seems to me, on the contrary, that we should very carefully discourage any tendency to be frightened about the world's future. The future is necessarily the dark ; and we must not fill the dark with imaginary traps and phantoms. If coming miseries are inevitable, then panic is but an additional agony in vain ; and if we might struggle against them, panic will unfit us to do so."

"It seems easy to you," replied Boris, awakening from his usual gloomy apathy ; "but the proof how difficult it is, how few there are like you, Lady Althea, is that a large proportion of the world's wretchedness has always been due to this tendency to be frightened."

"I didn't mean it was easy not to be frightened when there was something to be frightened about," Althea hastened to correct. "Nobody can tell till they have tried whether their nerves would bear the strain, and whether they would not be cowards at the moment of danger. I don't suppose I am a brave

woman at all. But surely, if we tried, we might be intrepid at least in facing a thought; we might be trained to possess ourselves at least in mind, and wait till we are frightened in our nerves. As regards May Days and so forth, we should not take to heart the horrors of the future. They can only be, at the worst, perceived by individuals; and is not the individual liable already in the present to the very worst that can befall him? Grief, loss of fortune and friends, untimely or horrible death? The individual, therefore, has merely his chance of every-day calamity increased by a very small additional probability. As to the race, we now know that, in the long run, it must benefit by all political and social change, since change of this sort means what the race insists upon; and benefit daily more quickly and completely, as the world moves quicker and quicker. Will certain things be lost for our grand-children? But can we be sure that they would value those things? We forget that not circumstances only, but man also will change; and we judge of a future for which we are unfitted by the habits and necessities of the present."

"Quite true, quite true," said Baldwin, gravely, wondering for the hundredth time at the girl's simple stoicism.

"Quite true!" cried Donna Maria, "but you forget that while all is righting itself in the long run, there may be an infinite waste of human wealth, of civilization slowly elaborated and rashly destroyed, a terrible

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waste of time and of suffering. The northern races came to share what had been produced—of thought, feeling, beauty, wealth—by the races of the south, that they might, eventually, add to it all, as they have done. But meanwhile, think of the ruin, the irreparable waste that took place in that process of sharing! I sometimes tax myself with prejudice and cowardice, with excessive conservatism, because I would fain hold tight to certain ideas, now become almost instincts, of decorum, of right and wrong, or what we still call by these names. But even, if I exaggerate, am I not right at bottom? Surely the bulk of what the Past has left behind, in ourselves and in our thoughts and institutions, is sound enough; we need only weed away what has come down, half-dead, to us, and add new things to suit new times. I know I don't do it enough myself, so you will think this all prejudice. But only ask yourselves whether it is not true that infinitely the larger part of us must always be the Past's. What can the present, which is but a moment, bring into competition with the centuries and æons? I am afraid lest in the great changes of the future, we may waste a moral and intellectual capital, in instincts, feelings, aversions and ideals, far surpassing in value any material wealth which may be wanted. I am frightened at the thought of what may come in the way of vandalism towards our soul."

In front of them stretched the long, white road, where a string of carts, with the characteristic leather

umbrella, sent up a cloud of dust into the blue sky, as they went with jingling bells. Every now and then the weed-draped walls on either side, the palings of dried reeds, were broken by some old-fashioned country house, with a vista of laurel hedge and statue-peopled avenue through its gates, and more frequently by the paved square before some rarely opened little basilica.

"Let us go in!" exclaimed Donna Maria, as they noticed in passing that one of them was standing open.

"I like your expression—*vandalism to our soul*," said Baldwin, as they stood in the little empty church, its tessellated pavements uneven from age, its marble columns opaque with damp, the frescoes peeling from its choir, and all its melancholy emptiness exhaling decay at the contact of the warm spring air. "It means a great, great danger; it ought to mean a great, great duty. The duty of diminishing so far as it is possible the conflict in which such acts of vandalism take place; the duty, consequently, of being unprejudiced, just, liberal, of giving instead of waiting that things be taken, of opening doors that they may not be broken in; the duty of keeping one's temper; the duty, above all, of trying to learn our duty."

"You mean, I suppose," asked Althea, as they passed out of the church into the warmth and light outside, "that we expose civilization to great dangers by our besetting fear of letting things take their own course; by our efforts to prevent or regulate all change;

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by our assumption of knowing what is good for people better than they can know themselves; what will be right in the future before the future has come? You mean all that system of protecting and directing which is due to an extraordinary marriage of presumptuousness and timidity, of irresponsibility and meddlesomeness?

"I mean that, but more besides. Of course, the more dogmatic and rabid we are the more dogmatic and rabid will become our opponents, and the more chance there will be of things finding their level with a maximum of breakage in the process; the more chance of such wisdom and decorum as has been hitherto acquired being lost in the scuffle over the new right and wrong."

"Toleration, in short—the virtue to which I cannot attain!" commented Donna Maria, very sadly.

"Yes, toleration; toleration to which you will have to attain, dear Donna Maria, if merely that your adversaries may approach and see how much wisdom and charm there is in the very tendencies they abominate most. But besides tolerating other folk's opinion we must do another thing if we wish to diminish the coming struggle and the coming wasting and destroying."

"And what is that, Baldwin?"

"I should think," answered Boris, bitterly, "that as Baldwin has just asked prejudice and hatred to be tolerant, he is now going to complete his panacea by getting unscrupulousness and rapacity to be honest."

By that simple means we shall avoid all collisions, and consequently all breakages."

"It is not because we cannot save everything," rejoined Althea, rather warmly, "that we should not save what we can. Because there are people who can never be made tolerant or honest, shall those who might become so remain intolerant and dishonest? It is terrible to think how much of the world's evil is due to people being mischievous simply because they have never been shown their mischievousness. Think what a natural power—like that of tides and winds—is being wasted or made destructive in all the innumerable people who are hurting their neighbours inadvertently, or under the impression of doing them good."

"Precisely so," answered Baldwin. "Of all the things which the world wastes—and it makes pretty free with wealth, health, time, and pain—the worst waste is that of intelligence and goodness. A very good woman once remarked in my presence that God intended us to do our duty *and a little more*. The little more is doubtless done by good people; but is the duty?"

"I think it is," said Althea, drily; "for we take care to make our duty very easy to perform. For instance, how many people ask themselves, I wonder, whether the source of their income is clean? Save that ancient Roman who answered that money always smells sweet, there are but few who are thus curious

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about their investments and trades; they consider that as long as they do not cheat any one—that is to say, as long as they keep their business contracts, it does not matter whether the business be beneficial or damaging to the rest of the world.”

“The answer of that ancient Roman,” put in Baldwin, “reminds me of a case in point. It concerns a smell, a very bad smell, but the air is good enough out here to allow bad smells to be talked of. This one exists, for a number of very simple mechanical reasons which I will spare you, in the workshop, kitchen, and bedroom of an excellent carpenter who sometimes works for me—”

“Tell me his address,” interrupted Donna Maria. “That smell shall be at an end to-morrow.”

Baldwin shook his head sadly.

“I fear my poor carpenter will end before the smell. He is consumptive, and has some internal trouble connected with blood poisoning. His wife had typhoid after child-birth; the whole family has had influenza of the worst type and frequent fevers; finally, a boy has died of diphtheria; all this in less than a year. The house my carpenter inhabits belongs to a descendant of that ancient Roman. He is not an usurer, like his ancestor, but a very excellent, kind young man, with a kind young wife and nicely brought up children. He cannot afford to get rid of the smell except by quadrupling the rent, because the house is letting cheap on account of the smell being there. Were the smell destroyed, my carpenter would be dislodged also,

and forced to go to a worse house, perhaps with as bad a smell. So it comes to the curious fact that my carpenter implores me, and I implore you, to allow him to end his days in company with that smell."

Donna Maria had restrained herself with difficulty.

"But it is too horrible! It must not be! Whether he likes it or no, he shall not live any longer with that smell. It is a public disgrace! The prince—for I know whom you mean—must sell the house or pull it down, and the town must erect proper workmen's dwellings in its place."

"And it is you," exclaimed Boris, "who hate the thought of Socialism? It is you who are so convinced—as convinced even as Baldwin—that everything ought to be left to private enterprise, and that, as Herbert Spencer teaches, State interference will end in Egyptian servitude and Chinese stagnation! Does not this case make you understand that the people who are actually suffering, or actually seeing others suffer all day long, should be willing to buy immediate relief at the price of any amount of Egyptian bondage and Chinese stagnation in the future? And yet I sometimes think that if Socialism does come, if gradually we find ourselves fed, housed, clothed, educated, and finally, of course, brought into existence by government regulation, it will be less the fault of the poor, grabbing for immediate food and leisure, than that of the rich, impatient to devolve the responsibility of relieving misery upon some one else's shoulders."

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"Well, then," answered Donna Maria, desperately, "let the individual find the remedy for individual evil."

"You mean, let Baldwin's carpenter fight the smell unaided or get reconciled to it?"

"No, Boris. Let the prince cease drawing rent out of that infamous house. I will write to him as soon as I get home. He will do it; he is a good young man."

"But you will merely be doing an awful injustice, Maria, to the tenants of the prince's other houses," said Althea, sadly. "The whole quarter belonging to him is in a similar condition. He is waiting for the Tiber works to raise the value of that part of the town; then he will build better houses for a better class of people. His father bought the ground with this in view; and if the prince were to build better houses and let them at the present rents he would simply be a beggar to-morrow."

"Oh, a beggar!" exclaimed Donna Maria. "A million less in a fortune of millions!"

"I don't mean that I should be a beggar in his place," rejoined Althea; "two hundred a year is a respectable fortune in my eyes, but then I don't *keep up the standard of civilization*. You have no right to expect a man to deprive himself, even for a year, of any of the things which he has been taught to consider indispensable: and he has been taught that twenty servants and twenty-four horses *are* indispensable to a man of his

rank. Count up, and you will see that, what with guests, the number is quite a low one."

"Well, then, what?" asked Donna Maria, seating herself on a low wall under some eucalyptuses, and gazing despairingly at the heaps of broken antique masonry and heaps of modern rubbish of the little wilderness they had come to.

"Why, I should say," answered Althea, drawing patterns with her parasol in the dust, "alter people's notions about their duty and *the little more*. This whole miserable little story of the smell brings home to me once more what I have been thinking ever since Mr Baldwin first taught me that our conduct was good or bad, according as it made more people happy or wretched. It seems to me that people should be trained (and civilization should consist in such training) to a certain larger unselfishness—not the unselfishness of giving up a toy donkey to a tiresome brother, or sacrificing liberty and usefulness to a prejudiced father or mother—in the same way that they are trained to a certain elementary decency and politeness. You shake your head, Monsieur Boris. I don't see why putting the good of the world before one's own, in the sense of sacrificing the smaller interest in case of conflict, should necessarily carry us to any marvellous feats of charity and heroism. It would lead to the habit of simply asking ourselves—very much as we ask ourselves at present whether this or that is customary or fashionable—'how will such a thing affect other people?'

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It would lead to the not very ascetic or very heroic renouncing of such advantages to oneself as are bought by an unfair disadvantage, nay, by any real disadvantage to others. . . . A better understanding of duty, and consequent doubt of the likelihood of the 'little more,' would, with time, acquire an habitual restraining power against getting money from unhealthy houses, bad professions, or extortionate bargains; a positive prejudice analogous to the one which at present prevents many enlightened persons from allowing their children to keep a shop or learn a trade. Such things would get to be considered as unfitting for a lady or a gentleman. Don't you think," concluded Althea, looking up with an earnest, serene face, "that to teach children the possible connection between money and typhoid stench might be the most useful form of elementary chemistry? And that to have a notion of the life of a coal miner or of the condition of a cottier would be more useful than to be able to draw a map of Northumberland or to tell the date of the conquest of Ireland?"

Boris shook his head. "Is it not wiser to let people defend themselves against nuisances and sufferings? They know their own interests best, and need not be forestalled by other people's scruples. I am a believer in spontaneity, and I think the carpenters of the future are not likely to allow their landlords to furnish them with typhoid and diphtheria."

"But, meanwhile, it is a pity that this particular

present carpenter's typhoid and diphtheria should not have been forestalled by a scruple, since it could have been forestalled by nothing else," answered Althea, coldly. "I believe in spontaneity also, but I don't see why that should make one disbelieve in man's spontaneous efforts at dealing fairly. For the rest, half of our existence, energy, and substance does in the present go towards defending ourselves and our interests against persons who decline to forestall us with scruples: police, law, the magistrature, prisons, hangmen, documents, inspectors, fines, walls, locks and keys, and spring guns, are all here in default of those scruples. So are armies, navies, fortresses, munitions, conscriptions, and all the things by which the blood of nations is drawn so freely. . . . So don't you think that, although inevitable perhaps at present, the system of letting people protect themselves against the lack of conscience and forethought of others does involve a stupendous degree of wastefulness? And that if the rival system of forestalling evil to others by an exercise of thought and will could come a little into vogue, there might be some economy of wealth, and time, and energy, and happiness?"

"I think," Baldwin summed up, "that Lady Althea might formulate her notion, in which I wholly concur, of our duty in protecting others in some such manner, to protect others from ourselves, from the injury which may be done them by our desires, our vanity and sloth; and to protect them from the waste of time, strength,

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and happiness implied in protecting themselves against us."

"And meanwhile," asked Donna Maria, impatiently, "who is going to protect the carpenter?"

"I fear, my dear Donna Maria," answered Baldwin, sadly, "that, except so far as a few palliatives may go, you might as well ask who is going to protect the men who built the pyramids. The suffering we see around us, although unfortunately not over, belongs, in a sense, and in a large degree, to the past, and our efforts can very rarely have a retrospective action; and the evil we see nearest our hand is often really utterly beyond our reach; that is why, in trying to remedy, we usually upset other things, but do not succeed in removing it. The more reason, therefore, that we should spare no effort for the future, since the present already belongs to the past."

The gate at which they had long been ringing had at last been opened, and they had entered a long avenue of eucalyptus running through a field of vines and vegetables, and leading to a quaint porched church, which from the road below reminded one of certain backgrounds in Signorelli's frescoes of monastic life. The place was now a reformatory, in the hands of some white-garbed monks, who were working silently about the place. Near the convent the eucalyptus avenue was massed into a little grove. One could appreciate the beauty of the straight boles, smooth like the fairest skin, of delicate, almost flesh-coloured brown, wherever

the grey bark has recently peeled off, and silvery in the rough parts; the beauty of that foliage which hangs so close, yet never clings, those wisps of cinnamon-coloured straw hanging among it. In that place, by the reddish mediæval brickwork of the little belfried church, fragments of broken antique sculpture lying about in the bushes, and monks and red-jacketed convict boys working silently all round, these trees, straight, bare, with their tangled foliage and half-flayed trunks and wisps of hanging bark, had an odd, ascetic look, making one think of some statue of John the Baptist in the wilderness, straight, rigid, fever-stricken, with shining emaciated limbs beneath his goatskin.

The austerity of the place, but particularly the story of the carpenter, were making Donna Maria very thoughtful.

"Listen," she said; "what you have been saying, caro Baldwin, has brought home to me some thoughts with which I have been messing and muddling ever since I read Tolstoi's 'Que Faire,' and since you made me read some books of political economy to show me where he was mistaken. That's the worst of living in the world and trying to do things: one's thoughts never get properly thought out. Anyhow, here they are. I understand that, economically speaking, by an adjustment inevitable in the present condition of wealth, I (and by myself I mean of course all people who don't do anything) have a right to all the time and strength and skill which other people give me,

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sometimes in the form of actual services, but more usually in that of various properties, in return for wages directly or indirectly paid by me. That by such payments I can buy services or provisions is due inevitably to the fact that I possess capital which I can lend out at interest. And that I should be able to lend out capital at interest has been in modern times, and probably for some time yet will be, a less evil to mankind at large than that capital should be possessed by the State, and individual effort hampered by artificial equality. This is the case—is it not?—at least, according to your economic books and Herbert Spencer. I am benefiting by representing, as it were, the less of two evils.”

“Precisely so,” interrupted Boris; “but you have yourself defined the condition as the less of two evils. It was also the less of two evils that the Spartans should possess Helots; that the Roman people should have been crushed by a land-grabbing aristocracy; and the feudal lord should have vanquished his Jacques, and Crassus have defeated Spartacus. Each of these was the *lesser evil of two evils*, but it was itself a great evil, the mother of other great evils, and the mother also of many other dreadful similar alternatives. That Crassus should have conquered Spartacus was better in one way; but the fate of Spartacus and his fellow thralls was ultimately avenged in one of the many miseries of bankrupt, discordant Rome. We are apt to overlook this fact, that the lesser of the two evils is not a good thing. It would have been infinitely better had Spartacus

not required to have been defeated, or had the wickedness of his victors (though probably less than would have been his own wickedness and that of his companions) not been inevitable like his misery and rebellion."

"That is just what I mean!" exclaimed Donna Maria. "Does it not lie with us, or rather does it not depend upon our views and character, to make the safer alternative itself less fruitful of harm? You will say I am always reverting to the same idea, but the reverting is just what makes one hope the idea may be a true one. Look: I feel that although in consideration of certain economic necessities, it is legitimate that I should have all fatiguing and disagreeable work done for me, and done by people whom I merely provide with what is requisite to fit them for that work"

"That is quite true," broke in Boris, who only saw the pessimistic points in any argument. "We spend upon those who serve us only as we should spend upon an animal or a machine, the cost of keeping it in working order. And if rich folk appear to do more for their domestic servants, it is merely because a certain superfluity above mere cost of subsistence and reproduction, a certain comfort and decency, is as necessary to fit a human being for approaching their persons and ministering to their personal wants as an extra amount of feeding and grooming is necessary to fit a horse to carry us on his back instead of dragging a manure cart."

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"You have expressed it perfectly, Boris," went on Donna Maria, sadly. "Well, to return, although I feel I have a right, on account of economic possibilities and necessities, thus to accept so much comfort and leisure and luxury in return for virtually nothing at all—for life without comfort and leisure is nothing—yet I feel that I have no right thus to take and not give, no right on account of the necessities and possibilities of the human soul. As the possessor of so much capital at a time when capital exchanges at such or such another rate with labour, I cannot give higher prices for the material services which furnish me with so much leisure and comfort; if I did, I should simply be pauperizing the working class."

"We never ask," murmured Boris to himself, "whether all this time we have not been pauperizing the idle class."

"But, as the possessor of a brain and nervous system—let me call it *soul*—capable of profiting by this additional leisure and comfort, I have no right to withhold from those to whom this leisure and comfort are due, the intellectual and moral fruits which cannot be produced without them, and which are almost as valuable and necessary to the class which cannot obtain them for itself (being busy obtaining my leisure and comfort) as what that class furnishes to myself. Hence, as much as I have a right to insist on a certain amount of material work being done for me in return for my capital by those whom my capital brings into and keeps

in existence, so much also have they the right to insist upon a certain amount of mental and moral work being done for them by those faculties in us which are brought into and kept in existence by the higher dose of leisure and comfort. In all past co-operation between classes set aside for different lives there has been, ostensibly at least, an understanding of such give and take ; and it is only nowadays that people have lost all shame and given the human animal only enough to keep him useful."

"You speak, my dear cousin, exactly as did the monks whose rule did not include their working as these good white creatures are doing. The world was to keep them in food and lodging and clothing, and they were to keep the world—allow me the expression—in spiritual requisites by dint of hard praying. This was quite fair so long as the world believed in the efficacy of these prayers ; but once it ceased to do so, it began to wonder whether these holy people were not receiving food, clothing and shelter in return for nothing at all."

"But in this case," answered Althea, "some of the prayers are manifestly efficacious—a very small minority *are* giving something in return. As to the majority, I confess that, so far from giving any spiritual food to the workers, they seem busily employed spoiling the bread and spilling the wine which they themselves are not inclined to consume. However, I wish everyone thought and acted like Maria. We look forward—if we did not life would be too hideous—to a future

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when no such difference will exist ; when all will work, without separation of class, for all ; when capital will be sufficiently plentiful and labour sufficiently in request for them to exchange otherwise than, as Monsieur Boris says, the oats and the work of a horse. But undoubtedly the coming of the future, its very possibility, will depend in some measure upon the leisured class working meanwhile for the unleisured, upon the recognition that, in the measure of our several strengths, we have none of us the right to accept and not give, to profit by the mere accidental economic circumstances which give us power over other folk's work."

" But I do not see," said Boris, " by what mechanism the intellectual wealth which the leisured class is, according to you and to my cousin, bound to produce, can be transferred, however piecemeal, to a class too busy and too hungry even to want such intellectual wealth. All the philosophy and all the art that the world has ever produced would be mere stones instead of bread to the tailors of *Alton Lock* and the miners of *Germinal*. It seems to me that you are all of you busy evading the terrible fact that, so long as inevitable causes continue to make capital scarce and more requisite than labour, capital will continue to obtain the larger share of the wealth which itself and labour unite in producing. And, as long as the wealth which is constantly being produced is divided with extreme inequality between the capitalist class (which also comprises the class of expensively trained, highly-paid workers) and the

labouring class, there must be the evils of excessive wealth on the one hand and of excessive poverty on the other ; of wastefulness and misery, of idleness and of overwork."

"That is quite true," replied Althea ; "but the fact of this being the result of inevitable natural processes does not necessarily militate against a possibility of diminishing the painfulness of this inevitable result. Let me explain by an analogy : Extreme cold and extreme heat are also the result of inevitable natural processes ; yet we have found the means of diminishing their painful and mischievous effects ; in fact, if we had not, the human race would have long ceased to exist. And if we are able to equalize and render supportable so many of the inevitable excesses of nature (indeed, to do so represents three-quarters of man's work on earth), tempering heat with cold and cold with heat, and uniting opposite qualities into such compounds as serve our purposes, ought we not also to render more supportable the phenomenon of capital's superiority over labour, by tempering extreme poverty with the excess of extreme riches ?"

"But that is what pious people have been preaching and practising ever since the world began, my dear Lady Althea ; and it is what we now call pauperization."

"Pardon me, Boris," answered Baldwin ; "what Lady Althea is alluding to—I know it because I have so often had the honour of discussing these matters

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with her—what Lady Althea is alluding to is a totally different thing. It is what has been considered rather a vice than a virtue till our own day, and it is called *Saving*."

Donna Maria turned suddenly round, where she had seated herself on a terrace wall overlooking vineyards and farm-buildings and great lowering ruins, with only the cupola of St Peter's on the horizon to remind them that they were within the walls of a great city. "Is that why you were so unsympathizing about my buying those pearls the day before yesterday? I felt that you considered me unprincipled, and I was determined I wouldn't ask you why, since you wouldn't tell me."

Baldwin merely laughed as he looked into the valley below, screening his eyes with his hand against the effulgence of the setting sun. But his laugh, though without bitterness, was very sad.

"My dear Donna Maria," he answered, "you really require no further explanations; you have been reading a lot of books on political economy, and you summed up the relations of capital and labour quite admirably a few minutes ago. I cannot tell you anything you have not read a dozen times over."

Althea turned pale as he spoke these words. It seemed to her very ungenerous on the part of her former teacher thus to resent, however impersonally, the indifference with which his teachings were usually met; and, at the same time, a certain sternness in her

character made her fear that Baldwin's disappointment in his audience would result in his ceasing to address it. But Donna Maria had the confidingness of one who is full of the power of forgiveness and also occasionally in need of it from others.

"Nothing that I have not read, very possibly," she answered; "but evidently something which I have not benefited by reading. So, won't you explain?"

It was, perhaps, not the first time that Baldwin had repeated his explanations; but as experience taught him day by day how little anything we say is listened to, he had made up his mind to repeat the same thing a thousand times over on the bare chance of being listened to the thousand and first.

"You were asking," he began, "what most honest people must ask themselves at least once in their life: are we worth the difference between the expense of our keep and production and the keep and production of those less fortunate than ourselves? May we be supposed to give them in the present, or prepare for them in however remote a future, anything equivalent in importance to the services which we receive from them, and in return for which (as the Socialists have seen quite correctly) we give them a portion of our own savings, but barely sufficient to breed, groom, and train our human beasts of burden? We are living, as you quite correctly stated, upon the result of our saving, living to-day upon the product of what we might have expended yesterday; and, in so far as no

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one could forbid our spending that money yesterday had we chosen, we are at liberty to spend its fruit to-day as we please. We have a right to subsist on our capital as those others do on their labour. But we must understand what we mean by *right*. In this case it means simply that mankind in the aggregate has found it more convenient—owing to one of those wretched choices between two evils—to leave to the individual his free choice in the matter of lending his savings as it has left to the individual his free choice in the matter of lending his labour. But social convenience (which has changed many a time and may change to-morrow) apart, have we a moral right to exist better, more comfortably and pleasantly on our capital than those other folk do on their labour? Or, instead of asking, 'have we a moral right,' let me say what means the same thing and is more intelligible: is the aggregate of mankind, including mankind in the future, benefited or damaged by our having the advantage? Please take notice that I do not ask whether mankind is benefited or damaged by the cause of this phenomenon, since that seems answered by the very fact of its persistence; I am asking simply whether in this choice between two evils, the evil of individual enslavement which we have rejected, together with socialism, and the evil of uneven distribution of wealth which we have preferred, we have not, as usual, got hold of a new alternative. This alternative is simply: is it better that we should spend all of our larger share on ourselves,

or is it better that we should replace a portion of it in the common fund whence wealth increases to be divided afresh? You have been reading books on political economy; you are acquainted therefore with the elementary distinction between unproductive and productive expenditure; the first means consuming our wealth in necessities, comforts, or pleasures; the second, employing that wealth as the seed for more, and a larger amount of, wealth. If we consume all the interest which is brought us by our capital (I don't speak of land and rent, because, except in the case of building ground, land is every day bringing less and less of what is really rent as distinguished from interest on capital invested in its improvement)—if we consume the interest of our capital, the world at large is none the better for its existence; if, on the contrary, we re-invest this interest in useful undertakings, the world is enriched by the produce of that investment, exactly as the world would be enriched by so many grains of wheat which we should sow in the ground instead of swallowing them in the shape of a biscuit. But you will say, what difference does this different employment of our income make to the classes who live on labour and not on capital? How will they benefit by the new wealth which may be called into existence?"

"Because the more wealth in existence the larger the share which every one will have of it," interrupted Donna Maria, eagerly; "and yet no—because it is

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again divided unequally ; this will mean merely that we shall again have a larger share in a larger total."

" But the point is," answered Baldwin, " that the more wealth the less inequality in division ; not only larger shares, but more even ones. For if capital—that is to say, wealth devoted to production—become more plentiful in proportion to labour—and capital doubles infinitely more rapidly than labour, for labour means population—capital will exchange with labour at a rate less favourable to its owners and more favourable to the owners of labour ; since the rate of exchange between the two—that is to say, the shares which each can claim in the wealth which they have united in producing—depends upon the relation between the supply and demand of the one and the supply and demand of the other. But it is absurd my repeating all this, which is explained in every sixpenny primer."

" Somehow or other, in the primer it doesn't seem to connect with any of one's own concerns, any more than the laws of physics in handbooks," answered Donna Maria, a light of comprehension coming into her face. " Well, then, do you mean, Baldwin, that it is not only no merit of ours if a little capital will exchange for a lot of labour, but that it is even to some extent much the result of our having everything that we like ? "

Baldwin nodded. " So far from resulting from any merits of ours, the fact that accumulated wealth should be so scarce, and the fact that we can therefore lend it out at a high interest, is very largely the result

of our folly, of our vices—at best, of our indifference. We—and by we I mean the well-to-do, educated classes—destroy an immense amount of wealth in war, or in the preparation for war; war which, when it is not a matter of foolish national vanity, is most often a matter of commercial rivalry concerning the wealthy classes, but utterly indifferent to the poor ones. In most countries we also destroy a lot of capital by means of protective tariffs, which put money into the pockets of manufacturers and landowners which has been abstracted out of the pockets of the taxpayers. These things we do in our public capacity, as members of Parliament, journalists, or politicians of the drawing-room, club, or *café*. Then, in our private capacity, we—and I think women almost more than men—destroy great lumps of wealth at one blow by rapidly changing fashions and throwing out of use expensive machinery, elaborately made designs, slowly acquired skill, and sometimes valuable raw material, all of which would have been kept in use but for our caprice. In these ways, by the exercise of our taste and influence, we diminish the accumulated wealth by large bold strokes, and by large bold strokes incline the exchange between capital and labour distinctly in our own favour. We do the same thing on a smaller scale by minute strokes perpetually repeated, wasting wealth piecemeal in enjoyments which do not improve us and very frequently do harm to others, in luxury, ostentation, and vice. By a curious coincidence of economical equilibrium,

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all this eventually profits us by keeping up the rate of interest ; and, by an odd reversing of practical justice, damages those who have had no satisfaction and shared no responsibility in it all. Were we less reckless, less vain, less grasping, less luxurious, ostentatious, and vicious—in fact, were we less destructive—the rate of exchange between labour and capital would be altered, but altered in favour, not of ourselves, but of others.”

“ And you think that a recommendation of already sufficiently uncomfortable virtue to the people who do not feel the need of it ? ” asked Boris.

“ I think,” answered Althea, “ that as we have been talking of the best way to relieve the pain which the fact of unevenly distributed comfort and leisure causes in some of us, we need not discuss the impressions of the people who feel no such pain, and who can be quite comfortable themselves in the sight of the discomfort of others. We have not been discussing how the totality of the world’s economic wrongness is to be removed—that will be the work of time and unconscious change—but how such individuals as are inclined may help, however slightly, to diminish some of that wrongness, or at least not to increase it. To those who suffer from the knowledge of other folk’s sufferings, who are abashed by the consciousness of their undeserved privileges, there is something bitter, but invigorating and consoling, in the fact that the reward of our honesty and wisdom and self-denial would be that others should be better

off, not we ; that the moral choice would have a moral reward."

"The thought is certainly consoling," said Boris, after a pause ; " but does it not resemble so many other consoling pieces of generosity, by which people have been able, ever since the beginning of time, to temporize with the misfortunes of others ? We have always been taking advantage of the misfortunes of our neighbours, and silencing our conscience by arranging to give them back a small proportion of what, under different circumstances, would none of it have been ours. Yet no one has been able to decide satisfactorily even about that proportion. The Jesuit casuists, quoted by Pascal, determined, after much disputing, that we can be expected to give only of our superfluity ; and of superfluity no one was ever known to be possessed, so . . . "

"But Christ," exclaimed Donna Maria, whose religious instincts were offended by her cousin's levity, "Christ had settled the question long before the Jesuits ; and He said, give all."

"I think," said Baldwin, "that were Christ to return on earth in our day—to come once more to be crucified, as the legend makes Him tell St Peter at that little church on the Appian way—I think He would have explained that to *give all* did not mean to make oneself a beggar in order that another man should cease to be one. What is wanted is to give, not that portion which may be useful to us and through

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us, but that other portion which would be more useful to others and through others."

"And what is that portion?" asked Donna Maria, eagerly.

"You are asking me the question which was put to those Jesuits," answered Baldwin, "and I fear I cannot answer it so completely and satisfactorily. Yet I think we may get at a few principles applicable to most cases; for the difficulty of the matter lies in the fact that the only means of making such renunciation really equal is to distribute it in a perfectly individual and uneven way. For one of these principles would be—the most important of any I can think of at present—that people should give up all such expenditure as makes them less fit for social, intellectual, moral, or physical uses, by fostering their laziness, sensuality, thoughtlessness, covetousness, and vanity. The side of human nature to which great expenditure on food, clothes, equipages, and so forth mainly appeal is the side which makes people less valuable as human beings; so as this kind of expenditure ought to be diminished merely with a view to making us less useless or pernicious, it is evidently the first which should be cut down with a view to economic redistribution, and an increase of productivity of capital, and therefore of wages."

"But you are not against such things as render life more easy and more delightful, Baldwin?"

"I want, on the contrary, that they should be within the reach of everyone; I want all lives to be full of

comfort and pleasure and variety, to have as much of it as can really be enjoyed ; therefore I am against a small number of lives being so clogged with luxury and novelty as to prevent these good things being increased by those who enjoy them, and even enjoyed as fully as they might be by those who possess them. To return to our rule. I think that we should curtail all such expenditure as fosters people's incapacity or unwillingness to give the world any share of work, whether work applied directly or indirectly to their own sustenance, or work given to others."

"It is curious," observed Althea, twisting one of the long grey eucalyptus leaves round her finger, "that a certain degree of over-spending invariably means, not merely a waste of what might have been productive capital, but also a waste of what might have been productive human energy, intellectual or bodily."

"It does more than that," replied Baldwin ; "for, as leisure is the most necessary of all comforts, idleness is the most destructive of all luxuries ; since idleness is not merely the passive *not doing*, but, almost inevitably, the doing of the useless or mischievous, of something requiring that other people should work, either to facilitate or to remedy. It is difficult to realize, and yet it is true, that the amount of useful activity which the world gets out of people is in exactly inverse proportion (except in the case of beggars) to the amount of time and trouble which they cost the world ; so that we get, through a series of *constantly increasing taking*

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linked with *constantly diminishing giving*, to the class which requires people to do even the most personal things for them, those whose life is all play, and who must have, so to speak, billiard-markers and caddy-boys to do the drudgery even of life's game. Nay, the truth is even more mad-looking than that, once we can lose the familiarity which makes us overlook its monstrosity. For these people waste the world's wealth and time and energy, not merely in harmless indifference, but often in absolute mischief. It is they who introduce new-fangled and expensive vices, and those constantly varying fashions which waste materials, throw skilled labourers out of work, and sometimes overwork tailors and dressmakers into consumption or death for the instant gratification of a caprice. . . . Not to speak of the destruction of their constitution and their children's, which sometimes leaves only disease as the net product of their lives and of the lives whose labour they consume."

And Baldwin watched his cigarette-end drop into the vineyard below with an expression of deep discouragement. The sun, setting in pale gold suffusion behind St Peter's, was flushing the brick of a great broken arch, which projected, like the rib, covered with sea-weed, of a huge wrecked vessel, out of the confusion of pale green vines and pale yellow reed fences of the valley. From the hidden road rose the tinkling of cart-bells, the drone of the carter's songs; and, as the first star throbbed into sight in the pale

sky opposite the sunset, the bells of those little early Christian churches and monasteries, the thousand bells of the distant city, began to ring the May-tide salutation to the Virgin.

"The question is," said Althea, rather to herself than to others, leaning against the rosy bole of a tall eucalyptus and looking into that sunset as if into the future; "the question is, how long shall we have the means of knowing these things and refuse to know them? How long shall we deem it unfair to profit by the misfortunes of others in small matters and honourable to do so in large ones? Shall we go on, honest folk that we are, returning most scrupulously to its owner the sixpence found in the street, and not returning to the classes below us the advantages which they have lost and we have gained in the windings and ups and downs of the world's history?"

"It seems all rather wonderful and incomprehensible, and yet as if it could not be otherwise," said Donna Maria, wrapping herself in her cloak as they turned to go. "I mean all that you have been explaining to us. One can't quite realize that—how shall I explain?—well, that a great duty should be so simple and so near at hand."

"I fear most people will not find it so simple," put in Boris, "and will refuse to admit that it can be so near at hand."

"Why not?" asked Donna Maria, impetuously. "Why, it's so convenient, one can begin at once!

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For instance, in driving home now we'll pass through the Corso, and leave word at that jeweller's that I won't have those pearls, Baldwin. Dear me, I had forgotten ; this is May Day, and all the shops will be shut because of the Socialists."

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

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I

THEY had entered the church of Fiesole just as the Candlemas procession was descending the steps of the chancel and winding through the nave below : seminarist boys in black skirts and white surplices in front, canons in various purples—from violet to brown—behind ; the lights of their tapers yellow in the dim daylight, against the pale grey stone. Baldwin was under that spell, due to boyhood passed in the still pontifical Rome, which the ceremonies of the Catholic Church invariably threw over him. The gold altar-piece shimmered among the wax lights in the bare grey apse, surrounded by those solemn faces lit up by the tapers ; the white and gold stoles moved slowly backwards and forwards, the great silver candlesticks fell and rose with the genuflexions in the lilac incense smoke ; the notes of the organ, the solemn enharmonic chants, the majestic Latin words circulated, themselves a procession, among the arches and the capitals, once a temple of the pagan. Below, glimmered the lamps that hang from the roof of the crypt.

“ There is nothing in the world to compare with it,” remarked Baldwin, as he lifted the heavy leather

curtain for Althea to pass out ; “ things, to be as perfect as these Roman rites, must be manipulated by unconscious centuries, welded by them into one homogeneous work of art : church, priests, vestments, lights, incense, chants ; and, on the top of everything, the venerableness of old age. Nothing in the future will ever replace them.”

The professor, who was returning to the faith of his childhood, under the stress of a passionate pity for the animals tortured by science—the professor had been kneeling throughout the ceremony ; and for a moment or two afterwards seemed absorbed in thought.

“ Ah ! ” he suddenly said ; “ you rationalists, what are you made of ? You throw away the kernel, and regret the husk. If these rites were not hallowed by the thousands of souls who have witnessed them, what value, what charm would there be in such pageantry ? The remains of the pomp of Paganism and of Byzantine Courts, mere perfect ceremonial ! and you regret it, you, who have willingly thrown away what is really beautiful : the spiritual church, the invisible rites, the splendour and the music in the souls of the saints.”

“ Are you fair, my dear professor ? ” answered Baldwin, as they crossed the square in front of the church and struck off into the steep lane which leads to the top of the hill. “ Are you fair to the souls of us poor, unpicturesque moderns ? I always hope that as you are a saint, one of the old sort, there may

be given to you that special grace bestowed upon one of the Fathers of the Desert, who, having been allowed to see the glory, invisible to earthly eyes, which surrounds God's saints, saw this halo round the head—no, there were no rationalists in those days—round the head of an acrobat showing his tricks in the marketplace.”

“There are acrobats who twist their legs and arms; and acrobats who contort their wishes and beliefs,” answered the professor.

“Well, then, let me show Lady Althea and you some of my tricks. First of all then, I wish to point out that the religious ideals which have been handed down to us from times of comparative ignorance——”

“Not ignorance of God!” interrupted the professor.

“Well, from times, at all events, of simpler social organization and of asceticism quite unsuspected of exaggeration; such religious ideals have accustomed us to look for a moral picturesqueness which we miss in the ideals of our slow-paced times. For we have learned that not every well-meant act produces benefit to others; while every act does produce an alteration in human affairs with consequences often impossible to forecast, and still oftener impossible to undo. We have learned that there are gifts delightful to the giver, which are full of evil to the receiver; and that there are self-sacrifices which really sacrifice the ultimate welfare of others to our own impatient enthusiasm. We can no longer strip off our clothes like St Francis;

and the stripping ourselves of what we ought not to keep is not a picturesque, inspiring, or, in fact, even a very visible proceeding. People forget that modern saintliness must often take the form of refusing to appear saintly."

"Picturesque!" exclaimed the professor, "there you are again with your love of embroidery, and candles and incense. Can you not understand that saintliness is not *picturesque*, but—I wonder whether you will think of candles and incense again—*holy*; and that what is holy is ineffably beautiful? But first, my dear Baldwin, are you sure your modern renunciation is not akin to the Emperor of China's clothes in Andersen's story? Is it not unpicturesque, uninspiring, invisible, simply because it does not exist? You have found out—your Mills and Spencers—that to give away one's money is pauperizing, and to mortify the flesh is bad for the health and temper. Tell me, then, of what do you allow righteous philosophers to strip themselves, besides, as you said, the possibility of appearing saintly?"

"A great many things," answered Baldwin, a little hotly. "Some of which, my dear professor, you could not strip off because you have never allowed yourself to possess them: luxuries, lazinesses, cowardices, big and small; and others which, allow me to say, you never will consent to throw away, foregone conclusions, which you suspect to be wrong but which you feel to be comforting."

The professor smiled at Baldwin's unusual impetuosity; his own warmth of character made him love indignation in others, even when directed against himself.

"You make me out a righteous man, which I am not, in order to overwhelm me the more with the sin against the Holy Ghost."

"Yes," interrupted Baldwin, "that is just it: the sin against the Holy Ghost, in Goethe's interpretation rather than St Paul's."

"But I refuse to consider myself such a sinner. I don't want to burn Herbert Spencer, nor to disperse the ashes of Riccardo; I am quite willing every one should have their own ideas; and so long as a man does no harm, what does it matter what he thinks?"

Althea had been following the discussion with that intent, rather puzzled look of hers, earnestly separating the grain and the chaff.

"But surely," she said, "we are bound to have opinions on all matters which lie within our practical influence; and for that reason to see to their being correct. You seem to leave out of the discussion the fact of what truth is: that truth is the expression of how things are. You speak of it as something abstract, about which we can afford to have very approximate, varying, and conflicting views; as a matter of individual taste. But *truth*, that is to say, the *how things are*, is of the same quality in whatever branch of thought; and if we base our action upon a mistake in intellectual

or moral science, we must expect a practical failure or catastrophe as inevitable as that resulting from a mistake in the most elementary physical matters. We should cry out, should we not, if any one built a bridge without knowing the nature of the arch, or even cooked a dinner without knowing the action of quick and slow fire, and water and butter. But in the more complicated questions which involve the possible destruction not of bridges or of dinners, but of happiness and usefulness, people feel, or at least act, quite differently. They accept some one else's conclusion, or rush at one themselves; as if, instead of playing for life and death in the terrible game between ourselves and the nature of things, we were playing for counters; as if words were mere words, and opinions incapable of producing any practical results."

"Ah!" exclaimed the professor, as they walked up a steep lane, whose rusty cypress hedge and white walls, overtopped by olives, framed in the snow-veined blue of a distant mountain; "Ah, my dear young lady, you have been to school with Baldwin; and he has made you believe that if only people would cease to look forward to a Paradise in Heaven they would quickly make one on earth. And then you wonder at the silly faith of us poor old fogies!"

"I don't think Mr Baldwin has ever taught me that there is any chance of the world becoming, within any appreciable time, anything of the nature of a Paradise. Once upon a time I thought the world was

a box of puppets going about to amuse nobody in particular. Mr Baldwin taught me that it was different, and that there are things I never dreamed of, called *cause* and *effect*; therefore that certain acts give pain or pleasure, or produce it in the long run; that the world would be rid of so much pain if it could be rid of so many such acts."

"In fact," broke in the professor, "that it was your business to diminish people's pain—merely their pain—that you needn't think of serving God so long as you served man?—or rather, so long as you preached the service of man?"

Althea did not seem to remark the contempt in the professor's voice and manner.

"Yes," she answered simply. "But as to the service of man, I don't think I should venture to preach it to others, still less to propose it to myself. I say *still less*, because one can't hope as much from oneself, whom one knows, as from others whom one doesn't know. It will be time enough later, don't you think, to consider how we can *serve* man? All we need think of at present is not to rob, or imprison, or poison, or starve him in the pursuit of our pleasures and vanities, and in the indulgence of our sloth——"

They had reached the highest point of the hill of Fiesole, a bleak spot, where the olive ceases to grow, and the cypress and the hellebore seemed to have ousted all more cheerful vegetation from the crumbly slate soil. A solitary stone cottage has lost its way

to this spot. A wretched, battered little place, dirty bed-clothes out of its windows, looking down on to the bleak rubble slope of the Mugnone Valley, looking up to the blue bleakness of Montesinario, to the Apennine circle, where the snow lingers and the storm-clouds hang. A wind-vexed, desolate, God-forsaken place. But in front of it are two tall wind-warped bay trees, and on the lichened wall is inscribed, "Canto dei Poeti"—Poets' corner.

The three friends rested for awhile before this allegoric hovel; for to each of them the place had a symbolic significance, of the sort which is rather felt than reasoned, and which is therefore the more potent.

"Look at this," at last remarked the professor, with a smile on his thin Tuscan face, in which, as in his gentle and fiery soul, his friends were apt to trace a likeness to St Francis, "if Baldwin had had the managing of the world, he would have bade the snow-wind deflect a little from this house, and the thunderstorms burst a little to its side; at all events, he would have provided it with a first-rate drain and an air-tight roof. Her Ladyship Sister Nature—as St Francis would have said, arranged matters at less expense: she bid these laurels grow. You wish to put comfort into life; but God has already put poetry."

"Yes," answered Althea sternly; "but while we look at the laurels, and repeat the pretty name 'Poets' Corner,' the people inside are aching from damp and cold. What would you have answered, dear professor,

if, when you were fighting with that carter the other day, some poetical person had remarked that, after all, there was good in the infamous brute, because his torturing the unfortunate horse called forth such beautiful sympathy in you ? ”

“ I don’t think our dear professor means that,” said Baldwin, taking the hand of his friend, who had felt a sudden horror at the light which Althea had let into his soul. “ And I think, in a measure, we both agree with him ; not when he follows the false saints in blessing evil ; but when he asserts with the true ones—the true saints, philosophers, and poets, all those who deserve some of these bays about their head—that there is something besides what the world calls pleasure and pain.”

“ And still you, you *do* reduce everything to pleasure and pain, Baldwin ! ” exclaimed the professor. “ You have taught Lady Althea, who ought to have walked, with the laurel crown you mention, in the company of the great stoics ; you have taught her the wretched little Epicurean heresy, that in this empty universe there are only two realities—pleasure and pain ; and that what we call soul, Good, God, are merely dreams which arise when our body is comfortable, or the reverse ; as Omar Khayyam expressed it long before Herbert Spencer, and in a better literary form : ‘ Hell is but a spark from our useless torment ; and Heaven but the breath from a moment of ease.’ ”

“ Yes,” answered Baldwin, “ I do reduce everything

to a question of pleasure and pain ; and yet I do agree with the stoics, with Sister Nature when she planted the two laurel trees ; and I disagree with—well, the philosophy which no one has ever had the face to formulate, but which forms the basis of most of our proceedings. I don't know exactly what name to give it, so I call it in my mind the philosophy of the donkey-cart. The donkey-cart in question was being pulled by a microscopic donkey, and driven by two stout men, outside the gates of Siena on a broiling August evening ; and it flew, as only carts can which have a donkey as big as a rat, and a driver as big as a tun. The philosophy thereof is as follows : This furious pace is very amusing, and, in that first coolness of the evening, extremely exhilarating to the two men, but it is difficult, painful, and exhausting to the donkey. In more abstract terms : our pleasure frequently coincides with the discomfort, pain, or detriment of others ; but there is nothing repulsive that warns us off pleasure ; on the contrary, when we view it quite simply in regard to ourselves and the moment, it has even, besides its own specific attractions, an agreeable air of naturalness and fitness ; it is, in fact, the combination of sensations or ideas or feelings which fits our nerves at that particular minute. The circumstances yielding this pleasure may also yield discomfort or detriment, but this discomfort or detriment is either in the future, or to somebody else. The perception thereof is indirect, incomplete, far from spontaneous, and very

often it does not exist at all. So we crack the wind of the donkey incidentally to getting an agreeable ventilation for ourselves. . . . This is, briefly, the philosophy of the donkey-cart; all the vice in the world depends upon it; and all the saints and sages have been railing against it since the beginning of time, that is to say, since the beginning of pain."

"And yet," burst out the professor, "your own philosophy knows no other basis. You and the donkey-cart drivers are at one in recognizing only pleasure and pain."

"Not at all. The donkey-cart drivers and I differ most essentially. They recognize the existence of pleasure and pain not too much, but infinitely too little. Only a very small portion of pleasure and pain exists for them as a reality; they are very imperfectly connected, because they have imperfect reason, imagination, perception, with the world that contains them, the world extending not merely in space, but in time, not merely the world of pain and pleasure to the north and south, east or west, but the world of pain and pleasure in the past and future. Know pleasure and pain? Why they know only their own, or a little of that of their nearest and dearest, not so much as their donkey knows of the pleasure and pain of yesterday and to-morrow. All around is fog, vagueness; as there is fog and vagueness around us when we feel faint, and our eyes no longer catch hold of the things not ourselves, and our ears are isolated in the same way."

"Say simply that the world is full of the pleasure of tormenting others," exclaimed the professor.

Althea looked at the professor with the same surprise as if he had been saying that it was easier to use one's left hand in drawing, or to ride a horse with one's face to the tail.

"Surely," she said, "that is a mistake, and due, in some measure, to the very insufficiency of realization which makes people seem to get pleasure out of their neighbour's pain. Surely we need not even take into consideration, since they are abnormal and therefore uncommon, the places where pleasure is taken in the perception of pain; the few miserable creatures who experience such pleasure must be of the same sort as those whose disease makes them experience pleasure in pain of their own. Surely, except in such cases, the pain and the pleasure are always separate; one exists because the other is not perceived, or not enough. I remember a doctor telling me that born criminals are deficient in the power of perceiving pain in others, and sometimes in themselves. Even with barbarous nations, even with street boys, the pleasure most likely is in the exercise of certain instincts of observation, in the watching of action and expression due to pain, rather than in the perception of the pain itself."

"Oh, but some people actually like giving pain. I *wish* to give pain, and as much pain as possible, to the brute who was beating that lame horse uphill," exclaimed the professor.

"I am sure you do," answered Baldwin, laughing, "but at the same time I quite agree with Lady Althea that in such cases your own pleasure is preventing, not arising from, the complete perception of the other's pain; you want to hurt your carter just in proportion as he seems deficient in sensitiveness; if you were suddenly to perceive that you were hurting him as much as he was hurting his horse, or rather if you were to perceive it as thoroughly, you would immediately leave off; and your momentary blindness to any pain save his would probably make you inclined to kick yourself in turn."

"Well, perhaps I should—though no, I should not. I should recognize that Christ was right in refusing to return evil for evil; but I should do it all the same—I should do it all the same."

"Perhaps it has been given as yet only to Christ," answered Baldwin, touched, though amused, at his friend's ferocity, "to completely realize pain and pleasure, and to feel in his own agony only the pleasure of the good it should buy for others. Anyhow," continued Baldwin, "the vivid representation to ourselves of what is hidden behind the barriers of another individuality must evidently be painful in proportion as it is real; if it is not painful, it is not vivid, or rather it is not there; our nerves are in advance of our mind. To realize, to perceive pain, means to participate therein in a greater or lesser degree. The mischief, therefore, I think, lies in our insufficient realization of pain, in

our not really perceiving it save in ourselves. In the majority of cases, and, despite the evidence of cries and contortions (which we sometimes perceive only as ugly, as our ancestors perceived them apparently only as funny) the pain remains too much of an abstraction; the tortures of the *not-myself* being perceived very slightly compared with the most moderate discomfort of the *myself*. We are deaf, blind, and, so to speak, under chloroform as regards other creatures. 'Tis a case, the largest in the world—as large as the world—of Bastiat's *what is seen and what is not seen*. We feel our own pleasure; the other fellow's pain is left to be felt by himself; just as the after effect, the *to-morrow* of an act is so rarely vivid in our mind, and the various complications *round the corner* are so difficult to imagine."

"You asked me, in what I differed from the Omar Khayyams of to-day and yesterday, including those who drink without philosophizing over their cups," continued Baldwin, after a long silence, as they descended the steep hillside which faced, at this moment, an empty universe, a valley hidden in white winter mists, against which the sharp line of cypresses, nay, the green palm growths of the hellebores, stood out as against a dim white sea. And as they descended, they were accompanied, along the steep walls, by the little brooks darting, with constantly varying motion, under their half-broken crust of ice: wayward live things, glistering forked creatures, always shifting

and changing, seeking a new way, breaking the ice and accumulating its broken scales, with every new crackle and babble on the way.

“You do not seem to grasp—somehow you saints never do—that the philosophy of pleasure and pain—of the pleasure and pain of the world and the universe—must teach the only valuable lesson of all religions and all philosophies: the lesson of a life transcending the senses and the ego, a life with all men and in all things. We exist at the beginning enclosed in our shells. The barbarian, the child, the brute, the degenerate, knows as little of what is passing in those around him as does one of the lower animals, less, one would think, than a horse or a dog. He exists in a shell of egoism thoroughly impenetrable, which preserves him isolated in the midst of the world, solitary with his own lusts and sensations, and as incapable of refreshing, of renewing himself in the great universal life, as a man covered with india-rubber from head to foot is incapable of being wetted by the stream he is wading in. His senses, indeed, are holes of communication with the outer world; but through them pass only communications isolated among themselves, leading to little, connecting him permanently with nothing; he is hungry and eats, thirsty and drinks; a sensation, an act and no more. ’Tis something else, infinitely complex, something comprising intelligence, memory, imagination, the power of living in the past and future, in the distant and problematic, which liberates us from

this hide of impervious personality. It is this by which, more and more, man knows the pleasure and pain of others, by which his life merges into the life beyond. It is this which allows us to perceive the pain of to-morrow as that of to-day ; the pain of another as that of ourselves ; and forestalls and prevents the one and the other. It is this which extends our pleasures to those of the distant and the future. It is this which prevents the past from becoming the mere gone and wasted thing. By this, enabling others to live, we are enabled to live ourselves ; not detaching us from ourselves, but attracting us to the great not-ourselves."

They had come suddenly, at the turning of a hedge red with hips and the berries of butcher's broom among the purple brushwood, to a group of osiers in a hollow on the hill : a film of orange magnificence against the olives, a sudden flame against the mist below.

"And what," asked the professor, stopping by those burning bushes, and looking vaguely at a space of blue sky overhead, whence the sun was beginning to melt the frost, to suck up the mists which filled the valley to its brim ; "and what do you call this *something* which enables you to do so many fine things ? "

Baldwin smiled as he answered very gently,—

"I have hitherto called it *soul* ; but if you will show me in what it falls short of the genuine article, and if you will find me a fitter name, I am most willing to call it something else."

"I thought as much!" exclaimed the professor. "But, my poor Baldwin, don't you see that you are merely playing hide and seek with the *beast*; and that what you call having a *soul*, is merely taking a care for other people's body, in order that they may take care of yours? Your philosophy of pleasure and pain turns spiritual life into a complicated conjurer's trick out of which there comes at last—what? a comfortable human animal!"

"Well," answered Baldwin, "is that so very common and so very much to be despised?"

"Not to be despised, certainly. Heaven knows I am convinced that a sound human animal is requisite before we have any right to ask for a clean human soul. But the means is not the aim. Do you remember a beautiful passage in Thoreau, about his picking up the jaw-bone of a hog, and being struck at the sight of its white, sound tusks, at there being, as he says, 'an animal health and vigour distinct from the spiritual,' and at the creature succeeding by other means than temperance and purity?"

"But I disagree utterly. I imagine the creature's temperance and purity would not have been our temperance and purity; but if the hog succeeded, it was because he had more of hog's virtue than his fellows."

The professor gave a contemptuous growl of "Hog's virtue!" and then went on with his reflections, but addressing them to Althea.

"Do you remember that passage?"

"I remember nothing, because I have read nothing," answered the girl simply.

"Oh, yes, you have; a good deal more of some things—of certain trash—than you should. But you shall read this! Well, do we not, every now and then, find such another on our road, such a hog's jaw, 'with white teeth and sound'? And are we not surprised, and in a degree confused, by the impression that whiteness and soundness make upon us? There is left in us, from pagan days, I suppose, a notion of completeness and the power arising thence; a charm of the thing rounding itself off, enough material existing for the pattern, enough pattern, the right pattern, for the material. We feel in the presence of this perfection *sui generis*—for there are perfections of all sorts, good and bad—a sense of awkwardness, of inferiority: we are poor creatures, incomplete, incoherent, full of rents and patches. A desire comes over us to cover our spiritual nakedness, which consists so largely of misshapen limbs or impotent muscles, in the presence of this unabashed naked animal. Yet it is different. The human animal, when we come to look at it closer, is not the fine thing we took it for: no, your pagan athlete is ugly in the eyes of God (and in our eyes when seeing in God's light) compared with a saint of the desert who has crippled body and brain in the search for something higher. To be an animal, on the part of a human being, is to be, in a measure, a monster; for it is monstrous to possess the human faculty of

reason and to employ it merely for the satisfaction of what the beast satisfies by bestial intuition ; and it leaves a hidden horror about what is seemingly a normal creature. The Faun, it seems to me, is not a real creature, though occasionally we talk as if he were. When man takes to the woods, eats roots and berries, he does not eat only that much which is necessary. Instead of the fabled Faun, a pleasing, cleanly creature, much beloved by poets, we get something like those goat-legged followers of Pan whose statues defile our museums, hirsute, stinking. That additional gift of God, a human mind, when it is not developed to a human soul, revenges itself for neglect by marring this apparent animal perfection : the beasts if they knew it, would turn aside in contempt."

"I can't understand what it all has to do with pleasure and pain," remarked Althea, folding her cloak about her ; "besides, I have never felt in the least abashed or awkward before people who seemed healthy animals and no more. They very often have about them a taint of what, even in the animal, would be diseased, for animals are temperate. Also, to obtain any physical beauty in a human being, we require more than the mere fitness of animal faculties to animal functions ; we must have the promise, in head and face and gesture, of a soul fit for spiritual life. Of course there is more health, if we understand what health means, in an emaciated saint than in a bloated sensualist : but the latter is exactly *not* like

the nice, sound, white hog's jaw, which is a beautiful thing in its way."

"No, no, you shall not call it soul!" exclaimed the professor, after a silence, suddenly reverting to his dominant thought. "It may be an excellent thing, one of which you can't have too much. It may be, it is, doubtless, the *sine quâ non* of the existence of soul. But it is not soul. Call it, if you like, virtue; it stands to human beings as what you called *hog's virtue* stands, I suppose, to hogs—it keeps them sound. The soul, teaches the rule of the soul. This mixture of intelligence, memory, imagination, of *ego* and *not-ego*, teaches us only the rule of the body and the body's vanities and pomps. The virtue of the soul is positive, efficient; 'tis the virtue of appreciation and love of the greatness of God. Your virtue is negative, teaching the respect of *meum* and *tuum*, the old insufficient pagan virtue of temperance."

"Temperance, the great *Temperantia* of the poor pagans, is not the mere *hog's virtue* after all," interrupted Baldwin; "its component virtues—chastity, serenity and moderation—even if they were not necessary for the preservation of the body (supposing an individual to be benefiting in bodily strength by the temperance of his ancestors) would yet be necessary for the preservation of the soul—But I forgot, I must not call it *soul*."

"Poor Baldwin!" exclaimed the professor, "your philosophy is but a vicious circle—pleasure, pleasure,

pleasure. My body to receive pleasure, thanks to your soul; my soul to see the pleasure of your body. Some day, perhaps—through no effort of reasoning, but through some sudden emotion—it will be revealed to you that the holy men of all times have been right—that all real life of the soul implies asceticism.”

The world at that moment seemed to repeat the professor's last word—asceticism. High against the sky—the high sky of bright cobalt—high, high up, separate from all things else, out of the bluish mist and the bluish olives, rose a jag of hill, vivid with glare of pink and white houses, printing itself, enamel upon enamel, brilliant, southern like an oleander blossom in June. But below, hundreds of feet below, the chill white vapours were moving slowly; slowly rolling themselves and unrolling, fold upon fold of damp gauze; settling in the hollows, hanging from the projections; luminous, colourless, hiding, you would think, an absent disappeared world. And, as the mists and the frosts went on shifting in those deeps, there emerged out of them vague and unlikely slopes of green and troughs of streams, fretted gradually more and more by dim rows of leafless trees; a chill and exquisite fairyland of grass and woods, too pale for this earth, yet blooming with a faint bloom of sere branches and stems, and sere leaf-encrusted frosty grass. A country of winding streams and sloping lawns, and flower-like trees, widening away; fit playground for some slim and thin-lipped allegoric nymphs, flitting about in pale, waving robes,

or hurling javelins against the intruder Amor, as in some picture of the Triumph of Chastity.

“But who would deny that there is wisdom in asceticism, nay that there can be no wisdom without it?” answered Baldwin. “Temperance, the temperance of the ancients, means more than merely limiting our lower desires, our lusts of the flesh, of vanity, and of power. ‘Tis not enough to restrain them within such limits as shall hurt neither ourselves nor our neighbours, nay; we shall hurt both ourselves and our neighbours, defraud, and mutilate, by aiming merely at that. The great goddess *Temperantia* should have been painted, not merely clad in steel and grasping a sword, but reading in the book of the world, looking beyond earth to heaven. We must direct the bulk of our vital sap upon such parts of us as transcend the mere necessities of our physical continuance, or our half-physical social comfort; on that which is over and above, which needs to grow, and whose complete development is a sort of ideal of perfection for us all, the something in which alone there is room and shelter for the greatest happiness of all. All baser wants—and I am very far from considering as such only those of the flesh—are legitimate not merely when kept within the bounds of doing no injury, no injury to the legitimate baser wants of our neighbours. They are legitimate only under the condition of actually conducting, directly or indirectly, positively or negatively to wants whose satisfaction in ourselves never threatens

the satisfaction of others. Asceticism, for all its disastrous exaggerations and follies, can never lose its charm for the mind ; for asceticism possesses, however mixed up with rubbish, the secret of all spiritual progress : the rule of not indulging, but employing, our commoner and more self-seeking part ; of replacing a negative virtue by a positive one. For the soul, and after all by *soul* we mean the same, all of us, is not a thing for merely ruling the body and keeping it wholesome, our own body or the body of others ; it is an aim in itself, a thing for whose perfection the body must be used. The soul, the intelligence, the sympathies, the memory, sense of beauty and imagination, is what keeps at bay the pain which walks the world ; but it is also what alone can extract from the world its full tribute of pleasure."

The professor was silent for a moment. "And yet," he said, "we do not understand one another ; you cannot yet perceive the real life of the soul, the aim of the soul's life, as distinguished from the soul's mere discipline. The soul is not merely *useful* because it serves man ; it is *noble*, because it can be united to God."

Baldwin shook his head with a melancholy smile, and was silent.

Those valleys below had widened out, clearer and clearer, though still bathed in frost, till their streams and tree-rows wound themselves away into the vague chill blueness of the plain ; the plain stretching you

knew not whence nor whither, formless and without landmark, till it defined itself against the pale blue sky in the glittering snow-crests of Vallombrosa. And above the pale allegorical valley, marked with faintly outlined house and cypress clumps—above this valley of Britomart, and under that snow brilliancy of the great mountains—rose gradually towers and battlements, distinct though disembodied: farms and villas transfigured into a Van Eyck or Memling vision of the Celestial Jerusalem.

“I have been trying to understand what you mean,” said Althea, thoughtfully. “For I think you must mean something real—something that can be thought and understood—when you say that the soul can be united with God. Of course you cannot mean a God whom man could ever approach, except in thought. But if that is so, do we not, after all, mean the same thing when we say that the soul, through perception of cause and effect and perception of beauty, through sympathy and memory and fancy, can participate in the life of all times and all things; and can find its complete life and joy only in the life and joy of the universe?”

This time it was the professor who shook his head. “Ah,” he said, “words cannot explain such things.”

II

Some weeks later the three met again; and as had become inevitable since the professor's return to the

beliefs of his childhood, the conversation gravitated at once to the question of a spiritual life.

"I have been thinking," he said, "about your definition of that beautiful antique virtue, or sum of antique virtues, *Temperance*; and I understand now the dissatisfaction which made me, I fear, momentarily almost blind to its beauty. 'Tis the virtue of people who looked at life mainly from the æsthetic point of view—the virtue of the athlete and the artist—heeding nothing so much as the debasing of a type, the degeneration of a muscle. Christianity views things more nobly. It takes away from man the sole proprietorship of himself, his thoughts and actions; his soul belongs to God and to Christ; he is responsible for it, must keep it pure because it is not his to dirty; must make it agreeable, so far as lies with him, to its real owner—to the Lord. What if the flesh tempt? God claims his own. Without such a conception, there is no real spiritual life; and where in Antiquity there is spiritual life, 'tis because the light of Christianity has illumined the higher souls—the souls of Plato and Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus, before it has risen above the horizon and become sensible to the lowlier."

The day and the place were appropriate to such discourse. It was the Thursday of Holy Week; and the solemnity possessed by such days, even for those to whom they commemorate but the holiness of a holy man, the solemnity of the austere spring arising again

out of winter, was intensified in the silence of the bells awaiting the symbolic signal of new life. The place was the convent of some teaching and nursing nuns, whom the professor had met in his rambles among the poor; he had taken his friends there as a silent expression of his constant, innermost thoughts. On passing through two formidable doors, they had found themselves, surprised and charmed, in a large cloistered garden; little box-enclosed beds—here and there already a pale, precocious rose-bud—and stacked up orange and lemon trees, all flooded with sunshine; a wide square of blue sky above, and nothing to intrude save the vigilant over-topping tower of the neighbouring observatory. And the infinite charm had grown with the realization that such a place—garden, tiers of cloisters, orangery, wide-arched stairs and pillared halls—should be contained, silent, airy and sunny, in the midst of those close, black streets, always damp and cold, with their constant rattle of omnibuses and carts, their jostle of dirty, hurrying people.

“I don’t quite agree with you,” answered Baldwin, as they sat, with Althea, who was making a drawing for the professor. “Both these theories take for granted that man’s soul is his own; for the Christian must give his soul to God; and other men have claims upon his justice, charity, and love only because such is the desire of God, and obedience to that desire is the expression of his giving his soul to God. The *Temperance* we were speaking of the other day, starts from a

different conception, possible perhaps only in recent days: the conception that, whatever the laws of the country may say, and whatever may be taught by its religion, a man has no absolute proprietorship over anything—neither his chattels, not his dependants, not his time, nor himself.”

“Then what becomes of liberty, without which man cannot have the merit of good deeds, nor even accomplish deeds which are in any sense good?”

“If by liberty you mean freedom from the interference of other men,” answered Baldwin, “liberty in the sense in which Mill used the word, it is to the increase of such liberty of the individual that we owe this new conception of duty. The freedom from a number of socially and religiously imposed notions and habits; the liberty of imagining relations between men and things different from those actually existing, has allowed us to suspect, among other things, that we are not the proprietors, nor even the irresponsible life owners of anything, least of all, of ourselves.”

The professor, absorbed in the charm of the place, was watching the Sisters silently coming and going in the cloisters below, and the flutter of the white curtain of the cell opposite, whose window framed in, together with the white pillow, the big crucifix, and the white-washed wall, a vision of contemplative life.

“All that is exaggeration,” he answered; “and Christianity alone has seen the truth in these matters. God wishes us to fulfil certain duties to our country,

and our neighbour, and our family ; but such public duties once fulfilled, our private life is in our power ; and indeed it is only in so far as the world has no rights over it, that we can fully give it to Him."

Althea had closed her sketch-book.

"But how can you make a distinction," she asked, "between private and public life, as if the one belonged solely to the individual while the other did not ? There is no life a man may lead with one or two others which does not spread and affect the life of all and every one ; nay, not even the life he leads with his own thoughts. For although, taken separately in each single instance, the individual's deeds and performances, and thoughts and judgments, may seemingly affect no more than the immediate surroundings, yet we shall surely find that as each unit is but one of many units, so acts become important because more than one person is likely to commit them. It is the old rule, of asking ourselves, what if all, or many, others, or even but a few besides ourselves, should do alike ? And in reality our doing a thing, so far from excluding the doing of it by others, almost invites them to do the same. So that the idea of isolating a case for examination must be false and lead to mistaken practice."

"Oh, my dear young lady," said the professor sadly, "what a disciple has Baldwin found in you !"

"I can't understand why he hasn't found many more," answered Althea. "I had never heard about such things before I met him ; but when he told me,

it seemed wonderful that I could have lived so long without finding it out for myself. Because it is so evident, is it not, that there can be no case of conduct hanging midway between heaven and earth, and that by cutting away the complicated web of connection—however microscopic—between all actions, we are destroying the very fact upon which our judgment depends? A great many actions would be innocent if they were disconnected with all further actions, and their guiltiness consists in their being connected with actions beyond, connected to the extent of helping to produce them. An example would be harmless if nobody followed it; but the very nature of an example is that it should be followed. Hence I should have said that no life is in reality so public as that which a man or woman lives irrespective of what we call public life. For do not people affect their neighbours by the way they spend their time, their money, their brains; by the children and friends they leave; the mischief or good they propagate all day long; much more than by a vote given on a subject they can affect only by a vote, or a counsel which probably remains but a counsel?"

"I see," answered the professor bitterly, "this is the discipline of what you imagine to be the soul, but which is in reality the quality Bastiat and your other economists call *foresight*, a mixture of calculation and imagination, with just a sufficient dose of sympathy to teach you when your galled jade will wince; the

whole apparatus allowing you to perceive *the effects which are not seen*, as well as those which are seen, and to have a better time in this world by interfering only as much as necessary with the good time of your neighbours. And you call your apparatus the soul ! ”

Althea flushed, but she checked her indignation as she reflected, from her own candid example, that surely no one could really wilfully misunderstand.

“ Yes,” answered Baldwin quietly, “ that is a necessary part of the soul’s work. But it is not enough. We must not be satisfied with training ourselves to picture the future consequences of our actions ; taken alone, it would produce mere selfish calculation. Still less, almost, must we be satisfied with the kind of sympathy with our immediate neighbour which produces already such a crop of vicarious selfishness under the guise of unselfishness, such a sacrifice not merely of our own small preferences, but of the larger interests of the world, for which our harsher virtues are vainly pleading. What we require to develop is the faculty of passing from the near to the distant, from the particular to the general, and of perceiving that this distant, abstract thing—class, country, mankind—is but the agglomeration of concrete creatures, creatures like ourselves, with possibilities of suffering and enjoyment like our own ; creatures who will become visible, tangible, only if we fix our eyes well upon them, as objects in the distance or in the half-light seem to draw nearer after a second or two of attentive looking.”

The professor had begun walking impatiently up and down the long cloister, the shadow of whose columns converged in a solemn purple procession to the great wooden crucifix at the end.

"Do you know," he said, "what grieves me most in your philosophy is that you admitted into it a certain portion of the teaching of every noble religion. No, no; not that I am pained by the contact: truth is not soiled by adjacent falsehood, and we must be grateful that any of it should be received. But the presence of this borrowed beauty—for, of course, *I* think it is borrowed—prevents your perceiving the ugliness of your philosophy of—the name is yours, not mine, dear Baldwin—hog's virtue. Do you not see how you spoil everything with your perpetual insistence on pleasure and pain?"

"I can't understand," answered Althea, meditatively, "why you should treat pleasure and pain as if they were base; why, pleasure is the very thing which should make us unselfish, since we care for it in others; pleasure is what would be increased by our understanding and appreciating all things around; and pain means that there is want of sympathy or knowledge or harmony somewhere."

"Of course God means us to be happy. That is His aim; ours to love Him; and the expression of our love and worship is unselfishness and self-sacrifice."

Althea thought for a moment. "But are you sure," she asked, "that self-sacrifice, unselfishness, is

all-sufficient? Has not our sense of the utility and rareness of this power of the soul made us hold other powers lightly? Have we not set it up as an idol, as our ancestors erected fire and cloud and all other great forces, irrespective of its employment and the results of its action? And have we not in so far wasted it, made it destructive of its own best effects, nay, actually harmful? It seems to me that unselfishness has been allowed to foster its opposite vice, to strengthen selfishness, active and passive. The renunciation of pleasure, the acceptance of pain on the part of the self-sacrificing, has meant the receiving of pleasure at another's expense, the avoiding of pain devolved on another, on the part of him who accepts the sacrifice. It has produced a deadness to the sense of duty, a dullness of sympathy almost equal to the very sense of duty, to the very sympathy which had given it birth; and it has fostered that dull habit of thinking that we have a right to accept whatever is freely given, without questioning the lawfulness of the gift. It has, above all, narrowed human relations to those of individual with individual, isolating and sterilizing that meeting of two creatures which should make but an additional link, an additional cell, in the great wholeness of life."

"I understand perfectly," answered the professor. "The sum total of pleasure and pain remains unaltered, and the world is none the richer than by the mere transfer of material wealth from one individual to another, when such transfer of material wealth is not

accompanied by an increase of that wealth due to its coming into hands more capable of making it fructify. You see, my dear young lady, that I once thought, as you do, that religion could be replaced by political economy. But, like me, you will one day discover that, although there is no gain to the world in the mere shifting of the satisfactions and dissatisfactions of life from one individual to another, there is great gain to heaven."

"I don't understand what you mean by *gain to Heaven*," answered Althea, as they stopped at the door of the convent, and gave a last look into that sunlit cloister before passing into the black street outside. "I always imagine that by God and Heaven you mean whatever seems kind, and reasonable, and beautiful in the world's tendencies, do you not? If so, does it not seem to you also a gain, a gain to the power you wish to serve, that we should realize the distant, the hidden, the seemingly abstract; that we should live for a wider life, in a wider life, than our own: that we should make selfishness and unselfishness a question no longer between two or three creatures, but between every creature and the whole world? The practical difference between us is that I wish to ask not merely, Shall I take up my neighbour's burden? but: May not my taking up that burden affect others besides my neighbour and myself? and, if so, will it increase or diminish the amount of evil in the present and the future?"

The chant of a litany, the weary voices of women, the bleating, indifferent voices of children, came from across the cloister as the door swung behind them.

"Ah," exclaimed the professor, as the three friends threaded their way through the black, damp street, crowded with dirty, half-starved looking people, pushing barrows and staring in at shop windows, "those know, those poor little sisters in there! they know that God looks not at the result of actions, but at the amount of love which inspires them; and they know that the aim of life is not to avoid pain or attain pleasure, but to be united in spirit with Him."

"Yes, if you conceive the Creator as hostile to the creation, and imagine that if He has turned His back on this world, we must follow and turn our back also. You don't really think that, professor; for what you really love is the image, the reflection, of your own loving kindness.

Baldwin's remark was lost on the professor, and they walked along in silence, joining the crowd of devout or idle persons who were making the day's round of the sepulchres.

The cathedral, which they entered after two other churches, was even darker than usual, with a darkness befitting the day's solemn memories. Out of the circular choir under the dome rose the chanting of priests and of boys, a queer sound, a swell and a rattle, like the breaking of the sea on the shingle. Or, rather, it seemed to descend, this harmonious dull clashing

of broken echoes, from the cupola above. At least, as the three friends stood listening in silence, it seemed less and less to connect itself with the circles of black and white acolytes (faces, framed in blackest hair, under the grey twilight, or the yellow light of the tapers), and the heaps of dull purple and crimson and white of the far-off canons, their faces mere reddish blurs.

"The world," answered the professor, following the thread of his own thoughts, "is not sufficient for man's happiness, for he is made to find full happiness only in God. Those who, instead of being led on to the Creator, stop short at the creation, are doomed to disappointment. All religion is founded on this knowledge. And its truth is confirmed even by the blasphemous cravings after unattainable pleasure of those whom Baudelaire calls "*de la réalité grands esprits contempteurs*."

"The dissatisfaction of those particular great minds," replied Baldwin, "great minds who systematically cultivate their ego, and decline responsibilities towards other egos—is due, on the contrary, not to their recognition of what this world really is, but to their very gratuitous assumption that it was created solely for their individual delectation ; or, rather, for the delectation solely of their individual nerves, palate, sex, eyes, ears, and vanity. And they scold mankind and the universe, which, after all, are bulky and old established institutions, for not fitting into the pocket of one small, selfish, superfine man."

"Poor things!" said Lady Althea, gently, "they are odious, they and their books; but I suppose it's equally odious of any of us to hate them, for it's awful to think of any one being so wretchedly crooked and ill."

The professor, whose writings were full of anathema against this school of Baudelarian pessimists, felt suddenly as if Lady Althea had prevented his treading on some poor bruised worm or toad. "Poor things! poor things!" he repeated.

"The people, on the contrary, who recognize the reality of things," went on Baldwin, his voice turned into a whisper by the great echoing chants, "ask less and give more; and giving, receive more in return. They see the past and the future, and the immensity of the present, very dimly and fragmentarily, but sufficiently to measure their own infinitesimal share. And, instead of importuning the universe to pay more attention to them, they try, consciously or unconsciously, to give more attention to the universe; to enlarge their position by going outside themselves. They increase their points of contact with the rest of Nature, and live in a greater number of its processes; becoming, through sympathy and dutiful activity, not merely men, but limbs of the bigger man, Humanity; and, through æsthetic perception and philosophic thought, clients, frequenters, familiars of the nearer and further circles of the great life beyond mankind."

Turning away towards the door, they were stopped short by an impressive sight. The great velarium of

the pulpit, intended as a sounding-board for the preacher's voice, was spread over the nave like a vast bird; poised in the gloom, floating on steady wings, mysteriously darkening the church with its presence, a sailing, brooding incubus, beneath whose shadow the crowd was hurrying along, quiet and vague; the darkness of the hours on the cross grown into a terrible, mystic, semi-living creature.

Baldwin put his arm through that of the professor. "For all our differences," he said, "we are seekers after the same thing: a higher happiness possible only in a wider existence, a union with something transcending our ego, its wants and experiences, a union with all that is, and has been, and shall be. For you, as for us, the real life is as little that of this church with its egoism of the soul, as of the tavern outside with its egoism of the body."

"Perhaps you are right," answered the professor; "perhaps—who knows? God speaks in parables to all of us, and we, instead of seeking for their meaning, are disputing about their unreal figures. I am not grieved, my dear friends, at your having lost this," and he turned back and pointed to that brooding horror across the church; "but I wish that you had still, like me, something analogous to the cloisters and cells of those dear sisters—a sunny, silent place, swept and garnished, wherein your soul could retire at times to live its life."

"But why retire, why shut out the world?" asked

Althea, after a pause. "Surely the soul ought not to be limited to one habitation ; it ought to be wherever we are, in our relations with all things ; it would make all places peaceful and sweet. Why should there be a spiritual life set apart ? Life should be honest, and intelligent, and appreciative, and loving ; is that not being spiritual ? "

One of the side doors of the cathedral was open, letting in a flood of day. And in it, their bodies merged into wide beams of luminous spray, their blond heads outlined with little loose locks, golden in the pale golden halo, stood a group of young girls.

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“**B**UT about this thing which Baldwin calls the spiritual life ; are you not giving it too great importance, dear Lady Althea ? ” asked Philip, with that characteristic effort, almost grown into a habit, of facing the possible realities of things, making him argue against the belief which promised him most satisfaction. “ Such a life, you say, is the only one which can satisfy certain natures. Granted ; but are you not mistaking the claims of a small number of individuals for the interests of the majority, from whom they differ profoundly ? Is it not conceivable that the people who can lead such a spiritual life may be mere accidents in the evolution of mankind, sports occasionally occurring, but leading to nothing, disregarded, despised by the great selfish, nay, brutish, but irresistible life of the world, which alone multiplies, and struggles, and advances, because it is the real life, and does not even give a look to our superfine aims and fastidious efforts ? ”

There was an odd contrast, or rather an odd coincidence, between his words and that college garden, in its July solitude, where the tall lime trees, almost joining overhead, made the moist blue sky between their shaking leaves seem more distant, higher ; while,

with the shiver and rustle passing from one layer of thin sun-steeped leaves to the other, the shadows shuddered and curdled like streams on the grass. Might those lawns, with their daintiness of thin pale larkspur borders, and the delicately crumbling walls, their grey and buff patterned over with violet clematis, symbolize perhaps this life that we hanker for, walled in from the brutalities of the world, rendered dignified, peaceful, and useless ?

Althea seemed struck by Philip's words : however much opposed to her character and views, any scrap of truth contained in other folks' objections always impressed her.

"The immense bulk of life is like that nowadays, and will, I suppose, remain so yet a long, long while," she answered ; "but the spiritual life—we may as well call it by that name as any other—is important, don't you think, because it is a sample of what the life of a bettered world—and the world *must* better—will have more and more largely to consist of ?"

"Is that not again one of our delusions—delusions due to our not being sufficiently in sympathy to recognize the great forces and aims of the world's progress ?" insisted Philip. "Even supposing it to be true, will this sample, as you call it, of a bettered world, conduce very much to the world's bettering ? For myself, I fear that the world could dispense much sooner with us people trying to live according to the spirit—for I suppose we *are* trying to do so—than with the good sound rank and file who do their work, neither better

nor worse, than they are obliged by circumstances, let alone the others who, without ideals or aspirations, are merely humbly kind and open-minded—more kind and open-minded very often than we aspiring creatures.”

“I don’t feel sure about what you call the rank and file,” replied Althea, meditatively; “if you are right that the rank and the file do their work only as well or as ill as they are forced to do it—for although they certainly carry on the world’s movement all the more efficiently for not troubling about it—their not caring how it goes must produce a great deal of waste and friction, without which the world might move better.”

“I don’t quite follow,” put in Baldwin.

“Why, simply—isn’t selfishness a very double-edged tool? Is it not probable that people who pursue only their own convenience will frequently disregard that of their immediate neighbours, let alone their neighbours in the future? But, of course, it’s quite a different matter with the other people whom Philip alluded to—the people who are humbly good and open-minded. Only, is he right in saying they have no ideals, merely because they have no power of reasoning about them?”

“Oh, if you are going to include them among those who live the life of the spirit,” interrupted Philip, “then I have been misunderstanding all the time what this spiritual life of yours means. I had understood you and Baldwin to define it as full of a constant and very lucidly conscious effort at union with the larger

life of all things, union through sympathy and understanding, a striving to enlarge the ego till its happiness became, to a greater or lesser degree, identified with the happiness of all other egos."

"Yes, certainly. They are rather big words, but I suppose they are the nearest expression for what one would like to realize; and, of course, they imply, as you say, a far greater intellectual lucidity than most of us are even taught to seek for—I remember how surprised I was when Mr Baldwin first talked to me of what he called the gospel of lucidity—except in practical matters involving money or comfort. But it seems we are still such very poor creatures, and our faculties develop most often so much at one another's expense, that the power of rising to large and clear views of the world is bought very often, don't you think, at the price of unfitness for humbler matters, and more especially of lack of thoughtfulness and loving-kindness for the mere human creatures around. So I can well understand that mere humble kindness and justice are more valuable to the world than any amount of such very imperfect spiritual life as we can hope for nowadays. "Indeed," added Althea, seating herself beneath a great canopy of light-permeated horse-chestnut leaves, matted, woven together into intricate design with the sharp black twigs and branches—"indeed, don't you think that if we want to see the pattern for the thinker's, the poet's—I take the most important types I can think of—attitude

towards the immense realities of the world, we must look at the way in which the poor in spirit live in the lives of their nearest and dearest ; we must watch the sympathy, the imagination which enables quite stupid people to extend their joy of the spirit, to limit their material demands ; to do on a very small scale what the spiritual life strives for on a larger one, to accomplish what always seems to me the one possible miracle, of always obtaining more without diminishing other folk's share, of always giving more without impoverishing themselves."

Philip listened with the eagerness, nay, almost emotion, which, rigidly suppressed through the sense of its power, revealed itself every now and then in a little clutch of the lips and eyelids. This studious youth with the blazing eyes and flaming orange hair, who might have been an idealist like Shelley if born in crasser days, was a curious example of the reaction against the cant of idealistic optimism which pushes our youngest contemporaries into disbelief in all formulated ideals.

"I did not mean merely that, when I questioned the utility of the spiritual life," he said after a moment ; "I was wondering whether what makes the world progress were not its mere brutal, forces its mere bestial determination to survive, and their unconscious action and reaction. Surely what matters is the great unconscious movement of human arrangements, the material, almost mechanical, changes of position, like the sliding of glaciers and advancing and receding of seas. This is

the only real progress, this perpetual heaving in various directions of nations, classes, powers, this mechanical unfolding of new possibilities, including its mechanical, necessary unfolding of ideas and habits; this unintentionally and inevitably brings with it all new repartitions of happiness and misery (or of their opportunities), nay, all those novelties in the spiritual life itself, all those conscious efforts at improvement which—to me at least—seem so ludicrously paltry in comparison.”

Baldwin listened attentively. Philip seemed to suffer from the sense of this overwhelming materiality which made him enthusiastic.

“Yes,” answered Baldwin, “I perfectly agree in all you say. This spiritual life, this conscious desire for better things, is a result of progress much more than a cause; and when it becomes a cause, as it tends daily more and more to become, it is by reacting on the unconscious, material changes which are giving it daily more power. But I agree completely also with Lady Althea, when she says that this life, consciously transcending the vanities and fleshpots of the ego (for after all, our fine words mean little else), is the only life we can well conceive as the result of the world’s progress—progress, shall we say, three-quarters unconscious and one quarter conscious. For if the majority of mankind ever attain to an even distribution, if not of comfort and leisure, at least of the requisites thereunto, the majority of mankind will, I think, necessarily partake

in the wider activities of the intellect, the sympathies, and the imagination, and give less weight to the other activities, simply because these will be otherwise provided for. Many of our baser pleasures—of the pleasures which diminish by being shared, and which are attained by the small individual filibustering, which we all condemn and condone—many of our baser pleasures, those of covetousness, ambition, and vanity, are probably the result of the mere struggle for existence, and will lose their zest, will lose their meaning, once that struggle for existence has abated its fierceness.”

“But you are reckoning on a change in human nature,” interrupted Philip, “and, what is more, taking for granted a necessary evolution in the direction of happiness.”

“Of course, I am reckoning on a change in human nature. Why, human nature has done nothing but change since its first appearance on the scene; indeed, save for constant change, there would have been no human nature, no, nor beast’s or plant’s nature to talk about. As to a necessary evolution in the direction of happiness, that is, so far, a matter of historic experience, nor is there any reason to expect that there will come a facing round; and, unless such a facing round happens—unless the forces of change should set in the direction of greater human wretchedness of nature and misery of circumstances, leading eventually to the solution of mankind’s problem by mankind’s disappearance off the earth—the time must come when the tendency to kill,

rob, cheat, crush, or humiliate one's fellow-creatures will be useless, hence unpleasurable, hence eventually extinct. For there is no more chance of nature going to the expense of attaching enjoyment to pushing other folk out of their place, when doing so will no longer help the maintenance of our species, than of nature going to the expense of a tail when the human ape ceases to benefit by dangling itself from branches. We may all notice how the forces of change, the force of circumstances, work, by noticing how little pleasure the majority of us civilized creatures gets from mere human slaughter, which certainly, in its proper day, afforded our ancestors the very keenest satisfaction. So that, for a simple, almost mechanical reason, when circumstances have become tolerable to most men, most men will become tolerable to each other. They will fulfil the first requisite of spiritual living, that of being comparatively untroubled by the vanities and fleshpots, of being freed from the exorbitant pre-occupation of self."

"All that may be true," persisted Philip, "the future may be destined to realize all the things you say, diminution of evitable miseries, security from want, leisure, adaptation of the individual to his surroundings, and that easy and natural circulation of all things which will prevent moral congestion, anæmia, and fever; without, therefore, containing one tittle more of what you call spirituality. People may be happy without bothering about other people's happiness, and become easier to live with without being any the more spiritual.

Is it not conceivable that this spirituality may have been a temporary necessity, a safety valve, in those earlier, those miserable stages of the world's life—for after all, I too believe that the world is evolving from worse to better—which will become gradually unnecessary with the consummation of a better order of things, very much as convents have become unnecessary since the world outside them has grown less brutal? Briefly, may not our preference for moral and intellectual development, our mistrust in materiality and egoism, be a mere prejudice arisen in the days when greater moral and intellectual activity was necessary? May it not be the expression of a past state of things, and in so far a superstition, a delusion? We have had, after all, to discard many others, which seemed, at first sight, beautiful and venerable. We have learned to know what stuff Franciscan visions were made of, we have guessed at the conditions of ascetic's ecstasies, we have taken the measure of Johannes Agricola, and found that his contemplation of God was no better than a greedy man's contemplation of hoarded rations in a beleaguered city. We are able to see more clearly; and many mists obscuring our sight, rheums and sand-grains of our own sickly eyes, have been cleared away, which we once took for dreadful or foolish realities outside us. May not this spiritual life which we hanker after be merely another of these?"

"Undoubtedly," answered Baldwin, "spirituality, like everything else, is being tested and sifted. A

great amount of spurious matter, hitherto mingled in the spiritual life, and accepted as part of it, is being detected, separated, and consigned to its real place, as just such stuff as spiritual living should cleanse away; and, for this very reason, we can attain, if not to a larger share, at least to a clearer conception of what true spirituality has been and must be. We can repeat more confidently than at any previous time, that the old people were right, and that the kingdom of heaven (even though we expect it on earth) will be of the spirit."

Philip frowned a little. It seemed to him, though almost incredible, that Baldwin himself had joined in that conspiracy of words against realities.

"In plainer words," went on Baldwin, guessing at the young man's thought, "a maximum of happiness for mankind at large is inconceivable apart from a greater development of spirituality, of intelligence, imagination, sympathy; of conscious, lucid interpenetration of interests; because such happiness is incompatible with a state of warfare, or at best of armed neutrality, of a 'balance of power' between the various jealousies and rapacities, such as must continue to the end of all things if the satisfactions of the ego and the moment remains the goal of all our effort. The immense importance—importance seemingly so disproportionate—which all thinkers and all thinking races have given to what we call the spirit, is due to the recognition, however incomplete and confused, that only through the spirit, or rather in the spirit, can human happiness indefinitely

expand. Christianity and stoicism, mysticism and philosophy, whatever their schemes and whatever their methods, have recognized the same great practical, commonsense fact, that only when happiness of the one is compatible with the happiness of the other, when happiness is increased by sharing instead of diminished by robbing, can the world become large enough, and man sufficiently free ; and that what makes the world large and man free is the great power which renovates as it uses, which multiplies as it unites, which, because it unifies, expands."

There was a brief silence, like the silence which follows on entering an empty church. Each felt a little shy of the other, as of intrusion upon innermost thoughts. The first to speak was Althea, since her attitude towards all things was so habitually reverent in its impersonality, that every subject seemed to her almost equally easy to discuss.

"I think," she said, "that we are misled by having got to associate with the notion of spiritual life, vague longings for something distant and unattainable, where such life would seem easier to lead—a St. Brandan's Isle or heavenly Jerusalem, separate from this world. We are haunted by longings for the wide green valleys watered by streams knowing neither sea-shore nor well-head, solitary between distant blue hills, where our soul may wander alone, untroubled, unseen, like the contemplative saints, with clasped hands and wistful eyes, of the old Umbrian frescoes. But our wishes and

visions are surely but delusion. The spiritual life is no remote region of existence, it is a mode of living."

"Doubtless," answered Philip, leaning on the terrace rail, and looking towards the great cedars spread black on the lawns, the pale grey, delicately etched belfrey, with its gilt vanes and great windows like organs, pale against the pale grey morning sky,—“Doubtless, but 'tis the mode of existence which, so to speak, transcends existence; which holds aloof in its serene intellectual appreciation of cause and effect, or æsthetic appreciation of harmony and association. It deals with realities, but turning them into visions.”

Althea looked up in surprise. “I can’t understand what makes you think that; and yet I see that thought for ever at the bottom of all you say on this subject. Surely a spiritual life—one that should really be so—could never be led in spiritual solitude; nay, is its absolute negation: a spiritual life must be led in the very thick of reality; must be, in fact, the life least visionary, and most concerned with practical results.”

“You mean *speculative* results, dear Lady Althea,” interrupted the young man with a sceptical smile.

“Speculative and practical, they are the same. That sounds like paradox, but I am not a paradoxical woman, am I? Surely if we look closely enough, we shall recognize that the more practical we wish to be, the more speculative, and, in a sense, abstract, we must become. For it is only through speculation that we can conceive the practical interests of the distant and

future, and it is not really practical to overlook them. The savage who eats all his grain, and has no corn the next year, is surely the most unpractical of men, and he is unpractical from lack of speculative power, the power of applying an abstract rule of conduct. But Mr Baldwin can put these things into words much better than I can. I seem to feel vaguely that *things are so*, while he sees clearly why they must be."

"I think," said Baldwin, bowing in answer to Althea's command to speak,—“I think Lady Althea sees quite clearly *why things must be so*; but, as usual, she rather takes for granted that everyone is constituted like herself, and that everyone recognizes as clearly and constantly as herself, certain spiritual necessities which are inborn in her, but have usually to be slowly induced in other folk. She takes for granted that we all instinctively recognize that nothing human can be foreign or indifferent to us; and that sympathy helped by imagination and reason, sympathy with everything living, must positively honeycomb our existence with interests. Such a condition she assumes to exist, and such a condition is the basis of what she calls, and I think very justly, the *spiritual life*.”

“You mean that such are all the things you have taught me to assume, or rather to think about at all,” exclaimed Althea, indignantly.

But Baldwin went on: “Let me expound Lady Althea's notion of spiritual life, the notion for which I may have casually furnished her with formulæ, but

of which she has most certainly furnished me with the example. She imagines, as I have said, that sympathy, imagination, and reason would honeycomb our existence with the interests of others, permeate one life with the other, that of the ego with that of the non-ego. Without any external tie or regulation, every individual would find himself, by the mere tyranny of fellow-feeling and forethought, a portion of an organization, not organized blunderingly by man, but made organic by the nature of things. Remark that this life of mutual interdependence would be at the same time one of extreme personal liberty and responsibility. Living very largely for others, and in others (as the complement to living through others), the spiritual person would have to live in a superlative degree, according to his individual judgment and convenience, for we may be satisfied with cut and dried, obsolete, perfunctory duties, when our object is to finish up with others so as freely to think of ourselves ; but we shall have to do our very best to apply all our ingenuity, when the comfort or discomfort of other people becomes, through greater intelligence and sympathy, inextricably mixed up with our own ; we cannot say, ' I have done my best,' to our own misery, or send away our own distress with an apology. So a true spiritual life, while enormously narrowing the field of what we consider indifferent action, will undoubtedly make not a little havoc in established notions of duty and self-sacrifice. For by the spirit only, by thought and feeling, can the life of one in-

dividual be welded with that of others ; and only such real union as this can be fruitful of good ; physical and economic ties, under whatsoever name, sanctioned by religion or enforced by law, are vital only inasmuch as they imply this interpenetration of soul ; without it, and whenever, instead of producing, they go against its production, they mean, all our finest-looking institutions, merely additional callousness, self-seeking, self-defence, and destruction."

Philip nodded. " I understand," he said, after a moment, " but—forgive my hopeless scepticism—are you not merely calling *soul* the instinct by which each ego tends to seek his own development and his own good rather in accordance with the good of others than against it, merely because both he and his neighbours are part of an organic whole, and consequently working, however unconsciously, in the same direction ? That is, I cannot yet say, my own belief, because I have no defined belief ; but the belief towards which, perhaps almost in proportion to the vague discomfort which it gives me, I feel the bulk of my ideas gradually gravitating. But you and Lady Althea, are you not going perilously near a kind of mysticism ; and will your mysticism not end, like all other mysticism that has ever been, in bringing you back to the very spot you are trying to avoid ? Will not your spirituality end, even like the professed egoism of other thinkers, in clearing away many duties towards others in order to instal in their place what we choose to call duties to ourselves ? "

Baldwin laughed. "My dear boy," he said, "you have contemplated the ideas of men like Nietzsche and Ibsen, or rather of their followers, so fixedly, that you see them, like a sort of mirage, in the middle of the views to which they are absolutely opposed, as one sees sometimes the sash bars of a window right across the wall opposite them."

Althea paid no attention to this remark. She knew little about currents of thought, and was merely surprised that Philip should have made a confusion where everything, to her simple, uncompromising vision, seemed so very obvious.

"There ought to be, don't you think, a continual revision and correction of our notions of duty?" she remarked; "they are apt to get superannuated, and, if not that, at least rusty and useless, for want of looking after; a razor isn't much use when it has been allowed to rust into something like a piece of rotten wood, and some of our notions of right and wrong have been allowed to get quite as much out of order. But so far from getting rid of duties, it seems to me that any sort of spiritual life would greatly increase them, at least, immensely enlarge them. At present, people seem to recognize little more than duties towards their immediate neighbours, towards what is near at hand and close in the future, duties concerning mere individual contracts and actions. But all these will surely some day be united and co-ordinated. We shall recognize duties in our thoughts, in our attitudes, in what seems the freest

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part of our life, because we shall recognize that it is through our thoughts, our beliefs, our pleasures, through the way that we sift our beliefs, affirm our opinions, select our enjoyments, spend our money and health, we shall affect the amount of thought, money, health, which others will have for their own advantage, and for that of the others whom they will influence in turn, an endless chain. We shall recognize duties towards our soul and body, our happiness ; because our soul, and body, and happiness do not belong merely to ourselves. I daresay it all seems awfully big words, and making a great fuss, but after all, we *are* talking about rather big things."

"It seems to me," said Philip, "that your doctrine of spiritual life contains the same amount of truth, the same sort of truth, truth rather to the desires of the soul than to its possibilities, as every previous spiritual doctrine, and that it is vitiated by exactly the same mistake, the mistake of making light of the great, supreme, dominant fact of *self*. Stoicism understood that a large part of our claims is harmful to others and to our higher self, that we must often resist our love of ease, of pleasure, of glory ; in short, that we must constantly refuse to be hampered or enslaved by portions of ourselves ; and Christianity understood that we are cruelly thoughtless of others, cruelly unjust towards them, refusing them what we claim for ourselves, expecting them to endure what we could not support, that we require perpetually to crush ourselves, in order not to

crush others. The mistake of stoicism lay in thinking that because we ought to become indifferent to certain enjoyments, according to the consequences which such enjoyments might bring, we ought to become indifferent in great measure to everything, and, for fear of being hampered by our possessions, to empty out life of all that gives it value. The mistake, on the other hand, of Christianity consisted in thinking that because the individual must sometimes think of others, he must never think of himself, that the happiness of others is more valuable merely because it is not our own. Hence, an absurd and impracticable indifferentism as a result of stoicism ; and, as a result of Christianity, an absurd, nay, pernicious self-mutilation for the greater expansion of other folk's selfishness ; in both cases, the paradox that we should live virtuously for the sake of virtue, whose practical results, considered as happiness, ought not to be valued. All this with the consequence of rendering fair and noble living on the whole more difficult, by severing it from the life which must always be natural to the healthy majority of mankind. Nowadays, we have learned or ought to have learned, from additional science and experience, that we are so constituted that indifference to the conditions of life is merely a partial death ; that we cannot feel the pleasures and pains of others as keenly as our own. Now, it seems to me that you, with your spiritual life, are returning a little to the old, wrong notions, and that, in so far, your doctrine will be faulty, and your action

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either mischievous or unpractical. Perhaps I have misunderstood, but in that case you must be more explicit, although I confess that I am morbidly afraid of any attempt to steer against the current of what we call nature ; the more so, perhaps, that this current seems sometimes to lead to such ugly mud and ugly whirlpools."

"That is perfectly true ; I mean all you say about stoicism and Christianity," answered Baldwin, "but it does not apply, I think, to the sort of spirituality which we modern people can aspire towards. Science and experience have indeed taught us, as you say, the immense supreme importance of the *fact of self*. But are they not teaching us also the faculties possessed by this self for expanding, and indicating thus the path to a dim future where our claims may be reconciled with those of others ? We are learning humbly, piecemeal, the truth at which those old framers of spiritual creeds made such magnificent, though defective, guesses. We are learning that the wider the range of our sympathies, the larger the activity of our thoughts ; the intenser, fuller also will be our life, the freer, deeper our pleasures ; the more restricted and less destructive our pains. Is there not in these facts the basis for a new spirituality, which shall consist in making ourselves not more indifferent but more sensitive ? Which shall not obliterate the central ego, but widen it, stretch it over other things ? After all, the progress of our race has all been in this direction ; every extension of duty, from

the family to the tribe, from the township to the nation, from the nation to mankind, has been such a widening of what you call the *dominant fact of self* and the gradual recognition of those pleasures as nobler which are compatible with the pleasures of others, which are increased by being divided. This recognition means also an extension of the self to the not self. We have learned facts concerning the *self* which show us what we must never expect from it; but we must not overlook the other facts, becoming daily clearer to our experience, which show what we can. We cannot doubt," added Baldwin, after a moment's silence, "that the more we develop, the more our happiness, nay, our very existence, will depend upon intricacy, upon superimposition of impressions, thoughts, and emotions. The artistic emotions, for instance, are incalculably complex compared with the sensual; and an average civilized being lives incredibly more in the past, the future, in things with which he has no material contact, than does a savage. Will not our life become gradually more complex in the matter of sympathy, more interwoven with the thoughts and feelings of other lives? Mind, I believe quite as firmly as Philip that we shall always feel our own pain and pleasure more vividly than the pain and pleasure of equal intensity and duration of our neighbours; nor is there any moral advantage in our ceasing to do so, since pain is equally undesirable wherever it is, and pleasure equally desirable, unless either imply a different distribution of other

pains or pleasures. But I think we may gradually get to compare pleasure and pain according to its duration and intensity, independent of whose pleasure or pain it may be ; and prefer the greater pleasure which we perceive intellectually and sympathetically in others to the lesser pleasure which we perceive as direct experience in ourselves ; this is already the case wherever there exists great affection or devotion, and I cannot see why it should not eventually become far more universal."

Althea nodded. "*I don't know much about affection and devotion,*" she answered, "*and I therefore cannot judge whether other folk's pleasure can ever be weighed against our own. But pleasure is so much less attractive than pain is repulsive ; even a small pain intellectually perceived is so capable of spoiling a large pleasure actually realized, that we could easily train ourselves to lose all sense of pleasure to ourselves in the presence of pain to some one else. We may surely get to feel about others as we do about our future self, incapable of buying satisfaction at the price of discomfort. It seems an almost inevitable result of extension of intelligence, don't you think ? We are still very dull creatures ; but we shall gradually become more lucid—sufficiently lucid to perceive our neighbours' condition and interest as well as our own. A man can get keen pleasure from pursuing a fox or stalking a deer, only because he is too dull to perceive the creature's distress in the same real way that he perceives his own satisfaction.*"

They had come, in their aimless wanderings, up and down and round and round among the colleges and their gardens, to the side of a chapel, whose great wide windows were like luminous green caves among the masonry—green like the hanging leaves of the elms all round.

“Don’t you think,” went on Althea, leaning against one of the smooth grey trunks and looking into that strange building which seemed filled, so to speak, with the very essence of the outdoor—“don’t you think that, in the same way that a musical note is agreeable to us only when the harmonics are in certain consonant relations with its own vibrations which call them forth, so also our own perceptions will become, when our moral ear grows more sensitive, agreeable or disagreeable, not merely on their own account, but on that of the other perceptions—other folk’s perceptions—which we shall dimly guess at like harmonics? Shall we not writhe if, while our own note vibrates to pleasure, we perceive the vibrations of other men’s pain? Nay, shall we not, perhaps, grow to find our own single note poor and thin, and require to have our own pleasure reinforced, made fuller, rounder, by an actual harmony of different sorts of pleasure in other individuals?”

“Listen!” said Philip.

For out of the chapel, through the wide cave-like expanses of transparent green clasped by the black trefoil of the stonework, came great organ chords and the white notes of children’s voices, while the thrushes

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whistled and the jackdaws chucked on the grass outside.

"That seems, in a way, related to what you were saying," went on Philip, looking with the incredulity which wishes to believe into Althea's serene blond face; "and—how shall I express it?—are not your ideas also, like this music, something delusive, making us believe in the old discarded faiths by the mere coincidence of our soul loving rare and harmonious impressions?"

"I think there is something more than mere coincidence," answered Baldwin. "If such sounds make us believe more easily in something divine, 'tis because they have met, and associated with, something divine in our nature."

"Let us go in and listen," merely said Althea.

II

They sat silently in the ante-chapel listening to the blond voices of the choristers, which carried out, in their slight, intermittent snatches of song, the impression made by the pale, delicate stonework, reed-like shafts and mouldings, and the lattice-work of pale glass, beryl and moonstone tinted, sparsely fretted with russet and green; an impression, a charm of unlikely slimness and luminous pallor, as of summer dawn over serene waters.

"Are you not allowing yourselves to be deceived by the accident of an exceptional character, of an

exceptional life," whispered Philip, as the chapel gradually emptied—"deceived, as one might be by this place and this music, into believing that the whole world might be made, with a little good will, pure, and dignified, and harmonious?"

"I don't quite follow what you mean," answered Althea, looking rather puzzled: her intelligence had always stopped short before one fact, that of her own difference from the rest of the world.

"I mean," exclaimed Philip, reddening slightly, for it struck him as a little sacrilegious to bring his turbid thoughts into this serene presence—"I mean that, admitting what you call spirituality to be as excellent itself as it seems to you, I yet feel doubtful whether we should attach much weight to it. Baldwin said that it is an effect of progress which will react to accelerate its cause. But is it an effect of which enough can be produced—enough for such reaction? Is it not a mere occasional accident, a sort of moral flowering upon which we dare not count? The movement, the progress, of the world, is a brutal thing, a hustling and jostling; and its direct moral outcome is no such delicate epicureanism of the soul. The struggle for life produces, as its inevitable outcome, something absolutely different: that sort of disciplinary virtue with which savages have kept down selfishness sufficiently for the painful survival of mankind, and with which even we latter-day barbarians still barely keep down selfishness enough for mankind's sluggish progress. This rude kind of morality—undis-

criminating, harsh, pig-headed, often unjust and mischievous towards individuals and details, constantly sacrificing desirable things to something only a degree more desirable, perpetually doing evil because good comes of it—this brutal rule of right and wrong is profoundly different from your rule of gradual and delicate identification of our happiness with that of others; from the very subtle, sensitive, and elastic thing which you call spirituality; but it is the only moral life which our low material and intellectual life has hitherto produced, and does at present produce in any appreciable amount. For what spirituality can you have in a majority either actively suffering from lack of food, comfort, and leisure; or (as is the case in our middle and so-called upper class) fighting to retain and increase an unequal share of such necessary things, and forced, by the dread of material misery and social helplessness, into regarding material superfluity and social conspicuousness as the only good things in this world? Why, the lives of us, so-called civilized creatures, are arranged in intricate systems of barbarism, whence it is still as difficult to escape as from the blemishes hereditary in our blood, which weaken our energies and pervert our instincts.”

Althea did not answer, but sat looking down on the funeral brasses in the floor, which, in the chapel twilight took the appearance, shapeless or worn out of all shape as they were, of dreadful dead floating fishes. Outside the jackdaws chuckled and the rooks cawed noisily.

“ Good heavens ! ” she said, after a moment, “ is it possible that the search after a better sort of life might be merely an additional impossible burden our thoughtlessness would impose upon this poor, wretched mankind, already straining every muscle in excessive efforts ? ”

“ I think not,” Baldwin hastened to answer ; “ I do not think you ever contemplated the possibility of such things except for a very small minority—the small minority of exceptional natures, to whom any spiritual doctrine, Christianity or stoicism for instance, could be otherwise than dead-letter. Philip is right in supposing that there can be but little spirituality in the present, even as there must have been but little, and at times none, in the past ; but on what there may be in the present, little though it be, depends what there should be—and there should be much more—in the future. The number is comparatively very small of those who can live to any extent in the future and the distant, seeking affinities between themselves and other men, between themselves and the order of all things ; seeking to bring themselves in harmony with the widest conception of life, and estimating freedom of thought and harmlessness of life as much as others do material and social advantages. But though comparatively small, their number is actually large—we have all met and known some of them—and their number may daily become larger. Little by little, most likely, they may become able to lead for a whole day at a time the life

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now confined, perhaps, to a few minutes ; they may get to feel and act and think in most things, instead of only a few, according to their soul's desire. And certainly, however slowly, the level to which, by grace of birth and strenuous effort, they shall have risen, may become the level of the many or the most ; as in the past, so in the future, ways of thought and feeling once rare will become gradually common."

"You are speaking then," asked Philip, a vague hope coming into his eyes, "of what Christ called the Salt of the Earth ?"

"The Salt of the Earth, which now, even more than then, is in danger of losing some of its savour. Sometimes the danger comes from cowardice or languor, from lack of intellectual keenness or intellectual training, from absolute ignorance of any life save the one which circumstances have chosen for one. Sometimes it is the fear of hurting the feelings, damaging the material prospects, of mother or child, wife or father ; sometimes the desire to abide by the letter of some law, which prevents these people being as large-minded and large hearted, as disinterested, truthful, and intrepid as their own nature warrants. There are many such. Nay, we are all of us, more or less, in one thing or another, among them : wretched creatures trying, if not in this way, then in that, to serve both God and Mammon, wasting our better possibilities in lazy or ignorant conformity to the world's vain and stupid ways, in timid acceptance of the world's obsolete and mischievous notions."

"Are you not rather exaggerating the usefulness of the salt, and the loss of its savour? Is it, after all, so bad a thing, as you say, to remain among the worldly?" asked Philip, his vague disgusted belief in the brutality of all human affairs uniting with his student's ignorance of the ways of the servants of Mammon.

"I don't think Mr Baldwin exaggerates the mischief of worldliness," answered Althea, as the chapel door closed behind them and they issued into the twilight gardens. "I suppose worldliness—the pre-occupation with distinctions and advantages which diminish freedom and efficiency instead of increasing it, the judicious exercise of vanity, covetousness, and cowardice—I suppose that worldliness is one of those automatic arrangements for self-defence which would never have been evolved if there had been no need for them. But I think that now, at least, it costs mankind as much as it is worth. Worldliness is one of the very few things, oddly enough, about which I know a good deal, more, perhaps, than either of you; and I am even more impressed than Mr Baldwin with the waste—complete or partial destruction—of excellent things which it implies: waste of intelligence, self-command, and even a degree of heroism. Indeed, I sometimes catch myself thinking of what we call worldly people as if they were the morally unfit. I don't mean that these people may not have most of the virtues, all the virtues I lack, and be, actively and potentially, excellent, heroic.

Only they are excellent and heroic, *despite* their worldliness, in the moments and portions of themselves where worldliness does not govern them ; but, where it does, excellence and heroism are simply wasted, and become a stumbling-block to the rest of the world, instead of being an advantage. Now I think that one chief utility of what we have called spiritual-mindedness is to reclaim from this destructive administration of worldliness so much moral and intellectual soil which may be as good and better than that which happens to be deliberately cultivated for the production of the useful instead of the useless or harmful. That is the use of the Salt of the Earth, to prevent the corruption of so much that is good."

"Then, if I understand you," continued Philip, as they went towards home through the rustling avenue of lime trees, "the exceptional creatures who, through grace of character and circumstance, are already able to live as much in their sympathies and thoughts as in their vanities and wants, these spiritual people, are, so to speak, rehearsing what may become the great reality for all the world, the life which makes other lives easier and sweeter, instead of more difficult and bitter?"

"Has not every thinker and moral teacher, and every true-minded disciple, done that since the world's beginning?" answered Baldwin.

But Philip took no notice. "And then," he asked, with a bitter smile, "when the majority

have risen to the minority's level, what will the minority do?"

"It will do the things we cannot even think of," answered Althea, quietly—"rise to the higher places which we, under the ledge of the hill, cannot even guess at."

They had left the gardens and were passing through the empty college yard, where the close-shaven grass under the sundial looked like the study of some open-air St. Jerome.

"Will it?" and Philip shook his head. "That, my dear Lady Althea, is exactly where I cannot agree with you. It seems to me that you and Baldwin are committing over again the old, old mistake of those who have sighed for a religion, who have tried to organize what can never be organized, a spiritual vanguard; the mistake of the good builders of these colleges and chapels, who wished to make it easier for sincere men to think and pray, and merely made it inevitable that insincere men should repeat formulas and go through ceremonies. No; were your dreams to be realized of a spiritual life, the minority would have a very different task: the task of undermining and breaking up, as it has always done, the spiritual community which had become, as every spiritual community must, mere dead-letter and hypocrisy."

"I think not, Philip," rejoined Baldwin; "because I am sure that Lady Althea has always taken for granted, in all our conversation, that the life of the spirit can exist

only in the spirit, that is to say, in the judgment and feeling of the individual; and that the spiritual communities of the future, nay, the only spiritual communities which have ever existed, are the living, fluctuating communities of thought and sympathy, of free individual belief and aspiration."

They stood for a moment in the gateway beneath the statue of the college founder, etched out by time in the soft, smoky black of the masonry. Outside the twilight had suddenly been rent by an incandescence of after glow, upon whose gold ground were stamped in black the chapel gurgoyles, the gables, the tower with its four wind vanes, and the round tops of the elms, picked out with the glow behind.

"I accept your communities of individual souls," said Philip, turning to Althea, "but independent though they be, you conceive them, of course, as all gravitating together in a common belief in this which you call spirituality; you take for granted that they must prepare the way for a sort of Kingdom of Heaven; must, as you said, be rehearsing what will become the universal reality. But what if this conception of the world's future be merely the result of a peculiarity of the world's past? What if this spirituality be, as I suggested, a mere inheritance from small centres—Greece, the Middle Ages, Palestine—of aristocratic thought, and therefore unfitted for the great democracies, more complete, more powerful, but, perhaps, also less sensitive and less noble? May we not be doing a

presumptuous, a dangerous thing, in thus digging channels for a great stream whose force we cannot calculate, in rehearsing for an unknown future, the adaptation of thought to practice and of practice to thought ? ”

Althea turned round, and her face was very serene.

“ Surely,” she said, “ there is nothing presumptuous or dangerous in each man and each woman trying to become disinterested and thoughtful, trying to enjoy the things to be shared, truth and beauty, as much as is possible. The future, whatever it be, will know how to profit by whatever is good in the heritage of the past and the present ; our business is merely to see that this heritage increase, rather than diminish, while passing through our hands. As regards adaptation of thought to practice, don’t you think we need trouble only very little about that, except in so far as our own individual practice is concerned ? Such adaptation must depend in every time, as in every person, upon quantities of circumstances which we cannot foretell. Let us see to our thought being as good as it can be, thorough, sincere. We shall take as much of it into our life as we can ; or, rather, it will take as much of our life as is worthy.”

THE END

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